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WORLD
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BEGINNING FROM JERUSALEM

**CHRISTIAN EXPANSION THROUGH
SEVENTEEN CENTURIES**

by **JOHN FOSTER**
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History, University of Glasgow*

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BEGINNING FROM JERUSALEM

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ABOUT WORLD CHRISTIAN BOOKS

TODAY is not enough to believe; it is necessary also to understand. From every part of the world comes the demand for books that will help the Christian to understand his faith, to find the answers to the questions that he and other men are asking, and to know how to present the faith to others. The series WORLD CHRISTIAN BOOKS is planned to help in this particular area of Christian need. The books are directed in the first place to the "younger churches," but the old distinction between younger and older churches no longer really holds. All churches are faced by the same problems. In all countries the same questions are being asked. The series is specially planned for those who are called to preach and teach, in the hope that the materials given in these books may help them to carry out their task more effectively. But the aim has also been to write so simply that ordinary members of the church who wish to study their faith may be able to use these books as individuals or in study groups and so to grow in knowledge and understanding.

The books are being published first in English, but it is intended that as soon as possible they should be made available in the main languages of the Christian world. Writers have been chosen from various countries and various branches of the church, with special emphasis on the younger churches. This means that there will be a variety of voices, but the aim and the hope is that through many minds and many tongues the faith of the church in its one Lord may be clearly set forth.

STEPHEN NEILL
General Editor

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chapter I

Beginning from Jerusalem

AT THE END of each of the Gospels two notes are sounded. The first is a note of *triumph*, because of a work completed. The second is a note of *challenge* to a task about to be begun (Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15, 19, 20; Luke 24:44–49). Our Lord has lived and died and risen from the dead. He commissions his followers to carry the good news everywhere. So Luke, having written “concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach,” has to add a second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, about the continued work of Jesus through those whom he sent. The Acts is the first book of church history. We are now to follow that story, through more than sixty generations, until it does reach “the uttermost part of the earth.”

Luke at the end of his first volume used a phrase (24: 47) and at the opening of his second volume returned to the idea (Acts 1:8), “beginning from Jerusalem.” About a hundred years later, Celsus, an anti-Christian writer, mocked Christianity’s Palestinian origin:

If God wanted to save mankind, why on earth should he send his spirit to one corner? Only the writer of a

farce would imagine the Son of God being sent to the Jews.

Yet the map shows Palestine to be not a corner, but a corridor, joining the land masses of Europe-Asia and Africa. The background of all Old Testament history is the fact of this corridor and of the two areas of ancient civilization which it joined. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, the North African power in the Nile Valley. They escaped and settled precariously in Palestine—precariously because on their other side was the West Asian power of the Tigris-Euphrates region. Palestine was too small and poor to matter for itself, but the two great powers must trample over it whenever either moved against the other. This is the disaster of which all the prophets spoke, and which ended in the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. From slavery in Egypt to captivity in Babylon, and all because they lived in a corridor! Yet the prophets see God's purpose in it all. As if conflict between African and Asian great powers were not enough, before the New Testament opens European powers have joined in. Alexander the Great, moving his armies toward the frontiers of India, occupied the corridor in 336 B.C. Then in 64 B.C. came the Romans.

Up to the time of Christ, then, the strategic importance of Palestine is to be seen in a three-continental conflict (North Africa, West Asia, and South Europe) over a corridor (inset on Map I, page 12). When we come to the New Testament, the picture is changed (as in Map I). We find Christianity "beginning from Jerusalem." The arrows, instead of converging on the corridor, are to be turned outward, in three directions—Asia, Africa, and Europe—to mark the progress of a universal religion.

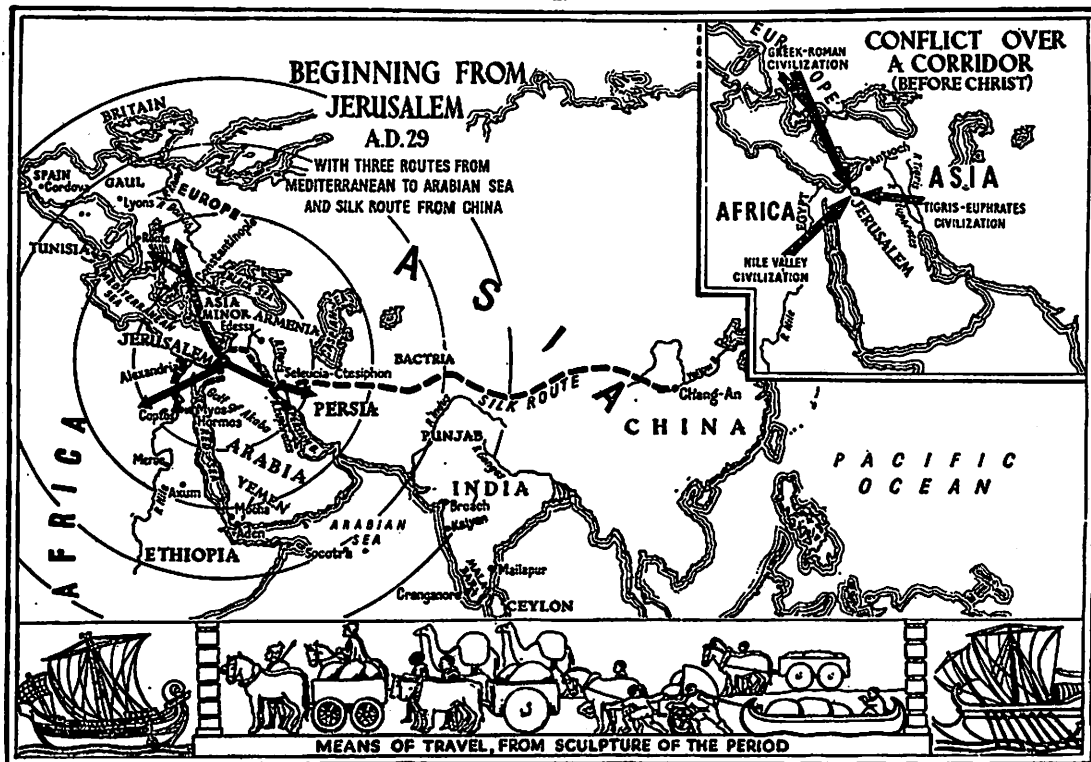
There in the eastern Mediterranean, what were the chances for such progress at that particular time? The Apostle Paul says that our Lord's birth took place "when

the fulness of the time came" (Galatians 4:4). Mark records as the beginning of His preaching, "The time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:15). Everything was ready; the opportunity was here. Let us ask if this was so with regard to communications. We need to look at two areas—the lands around the Mediterranean, where there were the world's best roads and safest land transport; and the Indian Ocean, where seamen were most adventurous.

The Christian scholar Origen, who was born in Alexandria in A.D. 185, wrote thus of the Roman Empire and its place in the purposes of God:

The Master said, Go and make disciples of all nations. Now it is certain that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus [31 B.C.—A.D. 14], who, so to speak, fused into one empire so many populations of the world. If there had been many kingdoms, men everywhere would have been fighting and warring, each for his native land, and that would have hindered the spread of the doctrine of Jesus through the whole earth.

From Paul's time to the birth of Origen, the Mediterranean lands had enjoyed peace under one rule. In addition to the Roman peace, there were the Roman roads, not mere tracks, but built and surfaced, with a stone to mark each mile, and leading, all of them if you kept on long enough, to the "golden milestone" in the city-square at Rome. This was a gilded pillar, and on it were the names of roads, and of the main towns all over the empire from which they led. Along these roads people traveled more comfortably than ever before. Conditions would seldom be so good again, never better, till the coming of the railway in the nineteenth century. In Paul's day, travel was not fast. By coach, horse, mule, or donkey, according to what one could afford, 70 to 100 miles a day was good going—no doubt too good for the donkey.



One could hardly describe sea travel as comfortable. Two hundred feet in length was a good size for a ship. On that one of Paul's, were there 276 people aboard, or only 76? (Acts 27:37 and margin). Paul's contemporary, Josephus, tells of being one of 600 passengers. It was the happy custom to lay up ships from November to early March for fear of winter storms. Sailors on this land-locked western sea were more limited in their seamanship than those on the Indian Ocean, to which we are now to turn.

To travel from the eastern Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, one might cross Syria to the River Euphrates and the Persian Gulf; or cross Palestine to the Gulf of Akaba and the Red Sea. If one started from Alexandria in Egypt, it was best to take a boat up the Nile some 500 miles to Coptos, and then spend a week crossing the desert to Myos-Hormos (Mussel Harbor) on the Red Sea coast (Map I). Three Greek writers contemporary with the Apostles describe the increase of traffic to this region of the Indian Ocean at this very time.

The first is the writer of the *Periplus* (Voyage), a guide book to the Indian Ocean. He tells of Indian, Arab, and Greek shipping about A.D. 60. The Indians fitted out at Broach (north of Bombay) and traded to the mouth of the Red Sea and down the African coast to Zanzibar. The Arabs had Mocha (west of Aden) as their base:

crowded with Arab ship-owners and seafaring men, and busy with the affairs of commerce, for they carry on a trade down the African coasts and with Ariaca [northwest India], sending their own ships there.

The Greeks from Myos-Hormos coasted down either shore of the Red Sea, then south to Zanzibar, or north past the Persian Gulf to India and Ceylon. The writer mentions the use of the southwest monsoon, which brings

storms and rain from June to September. Greek sailors, hugging the coast, had formerly regarded this as the closed season. Now they had begun, probably following Indian and Arab example, to sail before the storm, and let it blow them far out from land, straight to Broach or to Cranganore (Map I). Monsoon weather in the Arabian Sea meant discomfort and danger to these small sailing ships, but it meant speed. A merchant of Alexandria might get to India, buy his pepper, spices, perfumes, muslins, pearls, ivory, tortoise shell, and silver, and travel home, taking only six months for the double journey.

The second description concerns the increasing volume of this trade. It comes from Strabo, who died in the year A.D. 25:

Formerly not so many as 20 ships a year would dare to cross the Arabian Gulf, as it were to overstep the narrows, but now great fleets are sent as far as India and the extremities of Africa, whence the costliest cargo is carried back to Egypt.

Third comes Pliny the Elder, who wrote his *Natural History* about A.D. 70. He complained that these eastern ships were engaged in a luxury trade which now drained from the Roman Empire as much as one hundred million sesterces a year. We may estimate that amount in our own currency by remembering that a denarius was worth four sesterces, and according to Matthew 20:2, a denarius was one day's pay for a laborer at the time of Christ.

In wondering at the wideness of the world of these ancient seamen, let us notice its limitations. The writer of the *Periplus*, when his description reaches just south of Zanzibar, says, "The unexplored ocean curves around towards the west." Among seamen, knowledge of Africa ended there, till the coming of Vasco da Gama (see page 71) in 1497. And on the east coast of India, after mentioning

the mouth of the Ganges, and somewhere farther east, Malaya, the writer of the *Periplus* speaks of China: "This is not easy of access. Few men come from there, and seldom." Yet the Chinese Empire, as great and as civilized as that of the Romans, and far more ancient, did have some communications with the Romans. Until the sixth century A.D. the Chinese were the only people on earth to cultivate the silkworm, and from before the time of Christ silk was in demand among the wealthy women of the Roman Empire. Small quantities were carried over the Himalayas and shipped westward from Indian ports; but most continued overland to the Persian Gulf, with the Parthians as middlemen of this lucrative trade. The Chinese official *History of the Later Han Dynasty* preserves the record of a trade delegation to the Chinese capital in A.D. 166, from the territories of "the King An-tun." This means the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. What the Romans wanted was doubtless cheaper silk by buying direct, and the Chinese record continues, "From that time began direct intercourse with this country."

Thus, a century after the death of Peter and Paul (traditionally placed in A.D. 64), communications from the eastern Mediterranean, whence Christianity was spreading, may be said to extend even to the China Sea.

The central beliefs of the Christian religion are about God and the world:

God so loved the world that he gave. . . .

Go ye into all the world and preach. . . .

At no previous period had so large a part of the world lain open before men.

chapter 2

A.D. 29-500: Advance into Three Continents

IN THE Acts of the Apostles, Luke does "begin from Jerusalem" (chapters 1-5). He goes on to tell of wider preaching, which includes Samaritans and Gentiles (6-12). Then from Antioch begins the full Gentile Mission (13-28). He ends when the Apostle to the Gentiles has arrived in Rome. The author himself comes into the story (writing "we" instead of "they" from 16:10 onward) at the point where Paul crossed to Europe. Some have thought that the man of Macedonia (16:9) in Paul's vision may have been Luke himself. A doctor from Philippi, he may have been called in when Paul was ill in Troas (meaning of 16:7, 8?), and have talked to him of the opportunities on the European side. Of all the writers of Scripture, Luke is the only one who is not an Asiatic Jew, the only one who may have begun with a European connection.

This first book of church history, then, while beginning in Asia, deals with Christianity's spread toward the west. Yet Luke drops an occasional hint of Christianity's progress eastward, farther into Asia, and southward, into Africa. On the day of Pentecost, he says, there were many in Jerusalem who came from east of the Tigris (2:9) and

from North Africa (2:10). He seems to imply that Jews and proselytes of the Dispersion were foremost among the "three thousand . . . added unto them in that day" (2:39, 41). He leaves us to imagine what happened when they returned home. The Ethiopian eunuch after his baptism "went on his way rejoicing" (8:39). His way would lead 1,000 miles up the Nile to Meroe in the Sudan. What did this man "of great authority" do to spread the faith there?

We are used to thinking of the New Testament as a book apart, but there is no break between the Apostolic Age and later church history. Many of the conditions in New Testament times remain unchanged, or change gradually. One example is house-churches. Luke describes the first congregation after the Ascension as 120 people meeting in the upstairs room of a Jerusalem house (Acts 1: 13-15)—probably the house of the Last Supper (Luke 22:12). Every congregation mentioned in the Acts and the Epistles is similarly "the church which is in their house" (Romans 16:5). Up to the year 200 nearly all Christian worship continued to be in someone's house. They would choose a house with a big enough room, and one where they were least likely to be disturbed. In times of danger they would keep the place secret from all but trusted friends. After 200, we hear of places where there was a small special building, called "the Lord's house." Then in the year 261 the Roman Empire seemed ready to tolerate Christianity, and in some towns Christians ventured to build a "basilica," a rectangular hall with a rounded eastern end for the Lord's Table. In the final persecutions in the Roman Empire, breaking out in 303, the first act was often to pull down or set fire to such a church. After 312, persecutions in the Roman Empire ended, and church property increased.

By what means did Christianity spread? Here are four little pictures, and again how close to the spirit of the New Testament! First, there were full-time missionaries, some-

times described as "successors to the Apostles." About the year 250, Origen, who knew well both northeast Africa and western Asia, wrote:

Christians do all in their power to spread the Faith over the world. Some of them therefore make it their business in life to wander, not only from city to city, but even to villages and hamlets, to win fresh converts for the Lord . . . and people give hospitality to these messengers of the Faith.

Second, we hear of the witnessing of ordinary laymen, some of them of the humblest kind. Here is a non-Christian, writing about slaves "infecting" a whole household with Christianity. The date is about 180, and the place may be either Alexandria or Rome:

We see in private houses weavers, cobblers, washermen, and persons of the most uneducated and rustic kind. They would not venture to open their mouths in the presence of their elders or their wiser masters. But they get hold of children privately, and any women who are as ignorant as themselves. . . . "We alone," they say, "know how men ought to live. If you children do as we say, you will be happy yourselves and will make your home happy also." While they are speaking, they see one of the school teachers approaching . . . or even the father himself. . . . So they whisper, "With him here we can't explain . . . but you can come with the women and your playmates to the women's quarters, the cobbler's shop, or the laundry, that you may get all there is." With words like these they win them over.

Third, there is the influence of Christian example. Justin, born in Palestine, converted in Ephesus, and, about 150, a Christian preacher in Rome, wrote:

Our Lord urged us by patience and meekness to lead all from shame and the lust of evil. And this we have to show in the case of many who have come in contact with us, who were overcome and changed from violent and tyrannical characters, either from having watched the constancy of their Christian neighbours' lives, or from having observed the wonderful patience of Christian travellers when overcharged [at the inn or the customs barrier], or from doing business with Christians.

And fourth, we must add the martyrs—the very word originally meaning “witnesses.” Men ready to suffer and die for their faith were a challenge to all who saw them. Tertullian of Carthage in North Africa, about 197, wrote:

The oftener we are mown down by you, the more we increase. The blood of Christians is seed. Many of your own writers teach men to face pain and death bravely, but they do not win disciples as the Christians do, teachers not by words but by deeds.

That was how Tertullian himself had been converted.

With such pictures as these in mind, we can now look at the three continents in turn:

Asia

Christians did not forget that their religion had begun from Jerusalem. In the second and third centuries they knew and visited some of the sacred sites. Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, in 326 herself went on pilgrimage, and Jerome in 385 led a party which included noble ladies from Rome, not only to visit the holy places, but to settle as monks and nuns in Bethlehem, close by the Church of the Nativity. However, even in New Testament times non-Jewish churches beyond Palestine had

begun to take the lead, especially Antioch in Syria. It was here that the nickname "Christian" was first used (Acts 11:26); from here that the main expansion westward began (13:1-3). Antioch continued to be the Great See of the east. The other Great Sees were Alexandria in the south, and Rome in the west, with Jerusalem added for the sake of the past, and Constantinople after it was founded as the new Christian capital in 330. Their five bishops were later called "Patriarchs."

Of missionary work begun from Antioch, the most successful seems to have been in Asia Minor. Its importance may be measured by the fact that, of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, almost one half were either written in Asia Minor or written as letters to churches there. It long continued as *the* place where Christians were most numerous. In 112 the Younger Pliny (nephew to the Pliny referred to earlier), wrote to the Emperor Trajan, asking how he, as governor of Bithynia, ought to deal with the growing numbers of this new religion.

Many persons of all ages and both sexes are involved. The temples are almost deserted. . . . And it will go on.

It did go on, in spite of persecution. In Pontus, east of Bithynia, we find the earliest mass movement, under Bishop Gregory, who was well called "the Wonder-worker." In his city of New Caesarea, it was said, there were only seventeen Christians when he began, and in 270, when he died, only seventeen non-Christians. A later bishop, whose family came from Pontus, describes Gregory at work:

In early morning, crowds gathered at his door, with the aged, those possessed by devils, and other needy. And there was he, to preach, question, exhort, teach,

or heal. This was why he drew men to the Gospel, because they saw God's power as well as heard it.

About 380, this same writer makes this claim for his own part of Asia Minor, Cappadocia:

One could hardly count so many altars in all the rest of the world!

The Church in Antioch, which sent Paul and Barnabas to the west, was also responsible for carrying the gospel 160 miles to the east, over the frontier of the Roman Empire, to the small city-state of Edessa (now Urfa). An early tradition quotes a letter, supposed to be written by the king of Edessa to our Lord:

The Jews murmur against Thee, and wish to do Thee harm. I have a city, small but beautiful, which is enough for two.

This seems to be an attempt to push back to an earlier date something which did really happen about 200. The king was converted, and Edessa became the first state to make Christianity its state religion. Edessa may boast of two other "firsts"—the first church building mentioned anywhere (destroyed by flood here in 201), and the first translation of the Gospels from their original Greek (Tatian's Syriac harmony of the Four Gospels, c. 160). Edessa produced a wealth of Syriac Christian literature, both translations and original writing, and it was the church with Bible, liturgy, and literature in this language which was to push on eastward across Asia.

From both Asia Minor to the west, and Edessa to the south, Christian influences began to reach Armenia. Here, too, a mass movement took place, under another Gregory, called "the Enlightener." Sprung from a noble Armenian

family, he owed his religion to a Christian foster-mother in Cappadocia. Armenia was struggling for independence from Persia, and so for any change in religion might look, not east to Persia, but in some other direction. This gave Gregory his chance. He went to prison, almost to death, but by 300 he had won the king of Armenia. Armenia then became the first nation (Edessa was a city) to make Christianity its national faith. Idols were destroyed, temples made into churches, and even some of the priests came over to the service of the new religion.

Down the Euphrates and Tigris, and eastward to the Caspian, this Syriac-speaking Christianity of Edessa spread. By 225 more than twenty bishoprics had been established. By that year, too, the Persian (Sasanian) Empire had been revived, with Zoroastrianism (Parseeism), a high moral monotheism, as state religion. "You are defender of the Faith," the king told his son, "as well as of the country. Altar and throne belong together." In 313 the newly converted Roman Emperor Constantine wrote to the king of Persia:

I am delighted to hear that the fairest districts of Persia are adorned with the presence of Christians.

This well-meant letter made Persians suspect and persecute the Christians among their nationals as possible agents of Rome. In the period 339–379 there were said to be 16,000 martyrs. The church here naturally wanted to show itself independent of the Church of the Roman Empire. By 410 the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was the acknowledged head (*catholicos*) of the Church of the East. That is the name it uses, though others often call it "Nestorian." This is because, later, independence was further stressed by adopting ways of speaking of Christ which had been rejected in the west. Nestorius (bishop of Constantinople, 428) believed that when talking about our

Lord it was better to keep apart his humanity and divinity. "I sever the natures," he said, "but I combine the worship"—a difference of expression rather than of faith. This Church of the East, in spite of insecurity in Persia, would, by the year 635, reach right across Asia to China.

Arabia was of first importance in communications across Asia. Pantaenus of Alexandria is said to have gone to "India" in the year 180, and to have found Christians already there, with the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew left by Bartholomew. Jerome adds that Pantaenus' purpose was "to preach to Brahmins and philosophers," so he seems to believe that this was the real India. Most scholars think that the southern tip of Arabia, the Yemen, may have been as far as Pantaenus went. Christianity was certainly early here; and, about 354, Theophilus "the Indian" on his way to India is said to have converted the king of Yemen.

About 210, someone in Edessa wrote an imaginative work called *The Acts of Thomas*. It tells that the Twelve Apostles drew lots to decide to what country each should go, and India fell to Thomas. He arrived at the court of King Gudnaphar and his brother Gad. These names appear to be historical. A Parthian ruler of the Punjab, Vindapharna, and a neighboring prince, Guda, did live about A.D. 50. Did Thomas then really go to India? There seems to be no documentary evidence independent of this one doubtful source. Origen (c. 250) commenting on Matthew 24:14 says that the gospel has not yet reached China or India. On the other hand, as we have seen, journeys to India were frequently made from lands around Palestine. Tradition among the Syrian Christians of South India confidently claims Thomas. All the medieval travelers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries visited Thomas' tomb at Mailapur near Madras, and the Portuguese rediscovered this tomb in 1522. All that one can say is that Thomas' mission to India may be a fact, and the chances for and against are about evenly balanced. However,

from the end of the third century there begins independent evidence of Christianity's arrival. We are told of David, bishop of Basra, who in 295 "went to India where he evangelized many people." This would be by sea from the Persian Gulf. At the Council of Nicea, 325, one bishop styled himself "John of Persia and Great India," so Christianity may have arrived also overland from Persia. In 354 a deputation, sent by the Roman Emperor Constantius and led by Theophilus "the Indian," is said to have visited Christians in Arabia, Ethiopia, Socotra, Ceylon, and India.

Oral tradition in South India asserts that in the year 345, about 400 Christians, led by Thomas Cana (in the local language, Malayalam, Tomman Kinan), came with a bishop and several priests, and obtained from the king of Malabar permission to settle in his country and a charter of privileges. Two pieces of evidence support this tradition: First, the charter existed up to 1544, and is described by Gouvea, a Portuguese writer, sixty years later. Second, the year 345 coincides with the worst persecution in Persia, a likely time for merchants, trading with South India and knowing fellow Christians there, to migrate.

Cosmas, a Christian businessman of Alexandria, sailed across the Arabian Sea about 520, and later wrote:

In the island of Taprobana [Ceylon] there is a Christian Church and clergy and believers, but I do not know if beyond also. In the same way at the place called Male [Malabar] where pepper grows, and in the place named Kalyan [near Bombay]; and a bishop is elected from Persia, as well as in the island called Dioscoris [Socotra] in the same Indian Ocean . . . with clergy and a multitude of Christians. . . . The island [Ceylon] also has a church of Persian Christians who have settled here, and a presbyter who is appointed from Persia and a deacon . . . but the natives and their kings are heathen.

Thus by the end of our period it is certain that Christian merchants had carried the faith, and Christian priests had accompanied them, across Asia to the coasts of India and Ceylon.

Africa

It was through Egypt that Christianity first entered the African continent. Eusebius (c. 311) found an oral tradition that Mark was the missionary, and began by "founding churches at Alexandria itself." Jews made up half the population of the city, and there were many elsewhere in Egypt. They were progressive, influential, and may have provided Mark with his first opportunity. The following facts will remind us of the importance of Greek Christianity in Egypt: the oldest manuscript fragment of the Greek New Testament, c. 130, was found there; and the oldest complete manuscript comes from there. Also the first center of Christian learning was that founded before 180 at Alexandria by Pantaenus, with Clement and Origen as his successors. Christianity was early reaching the people of the land as well as the Greek-speaking city populations, and for them a translation of the New Testament into Coptic (Egyptian) was made probably in the third century. Syriac for the east, Latin for the west, and Coptic for this part of Africa—Christianity was reaching to the language of the people in all three continents. No part of the world saw fiercer persecutions. In Origen's youth (c. 200), we are told that Egypt was producing "myriads of martyrs." Yet Origen himself, in 250, could confidently write:

Every form of worship will be destroyed, except the rule of Christ, which will alone prevail. . . . It will one day triumph everywhere as its principles take possession of the minds of men more and more every day.

Eusebius says that in the persecutions of 311 he saw "thousands of men, women, and children" face cruel deaths, "until the executioners themselves grew weary." They included "those distinguished for wealth, birth, learning, who yet put first their faith in our Saviour." Here was one of the areas most ready for the change-over (312) to a pro-Christian government. Then the prophecy of Origen began to be fulfilled, and other religions died away. By the end of the fifth century the Egyptian, or Coptic, Church was showing much independence of spirit under its head, the bishop of Alexandria.

In Upper Egypt, Antony, a Copt (c. 270), left his home village and lived as a solitary (monk) in the desert. Strangely enough, though he had left the world, he was one of the greatest influences on the fourth-century church. In 311 he suddenly appeared in the streets of Alexandria to urge Christians to stand fast—and what could the persecutors do to him who already had left all? Again he appeared in 335, when the danger was heresy. Even the Emperor Constantine wrote to him as to a Father-in-God. At a time when the Roman Empire had adopted Christianity, and many Christians were nominal, Antony protested that the Christian way could never become easy because Christ demands all:

Let no man who has renounced the world think that he has done some great thing. The whole earth set over against heaven's infinity is scant and poor.

This movement, which grew into monasticism, spread east and west. Men seeking the more wholly committed life became monks. Since they were the more devoted Christians, it was monks who became missionaries. For the next thousand years Christianity was to spread chiefly through the work of monks.

North Africa shared with Egypt the importance of being

the granary of Italy. The towns of the north coast were thoroughly Romanized. Besides Roman colonists there were descendants of earlier settlers, both Phoenicians and Jews. The people of the land were Berbers. Christianity seems to have spread first among the Latin colonists of the coast. Of twelve martyrs in the year 180, eleven have Latin names; the twelfth is Phoenician. Tunisia produced the three greatest Latin Fathers—Tertullian (d. 230), Cyprian (d. 258), and Augustine (d. 430). Martyrs and Fathers show North African Christianity to have been fervent and devout. Alas, there were also some Christians here who were fanatical and divisive. The schism called Donatism arose out of personal differences; it was continued and embittered by social and racial differences—between property-owning colonists and the poor Berbers. Donatism is an early example of division sapping Christianity's strength. A weak and divided church would not be able to withstand in the evil day, the day of Islam's coming in the seventh century.

Christianity (c. 330) entered Africa by way of the Red Sea. Aedesius and his brother Frumentius were on a ship which put in at a Red Sea port. Everyone was massacred except the two youths, who became servants in the royal household at Axum (Map I), won the king's favor, and on his death were made regents of the kingdom. Frumentius found Christians among the merchants trading with Axum, built a house of prayer, and won some converts. Later both were free to go home, but Frumentius went to the bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius, and asked him to send a bishop and clergy. Athanasius replied, "And who so fitting as yourself?" Frumentius thus became the founder of the Ethiopic Church, which (with its Mother-Church, the Coptic) is the African representative of the Church of the Fathers. Unlike the Coptic, the Church of Ethiopia stands in a country where to this day Christianity is the national religion.

Europe

We shall now review: Christianity in the west before Constantine; Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire; Christianity outlasting the Western Roman Empire; and new expansion in the far northwest.

The West before Constantine. Who first brought Christianity to Rome? The non-Christian historian Tacitus (c. 116) explains its presence by saying that the capital is a sink where dirt of all kinds gathers. In the year 49 the emperor expelled all Jews from the city because of anti-Christian rioting (Acts 18:2). A few years later, Christians in Rome received the most important letter ever written, Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Toward the end of the century the Church in Rome was concerned about that in Corinth, still, as in Paul's day, a disorderly congregation, and, through one Clement, wrote to urge them to better discipline. In 154 the bishop of Rome summoned the aged Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and disciple of John, because Christians in Asia Minor and in Rome differed as to the date of the Easter festival. The wealthy Roman Church was also sending money to help Christians in the Balkans condemned to work in the mines. These eastern connections are not surprising. Not only had Christianity come from the east, but many of Rome's Christians were themselves of eastern origin, and till the third century most of them spoke Greek. Among the martyrs of the year 163 in Rome we find Justin, a wandering preacher, born in Palestine, converted in Ephesus. Some of the other prisoners told the judge, "From our parents we received this good confession," and when asked, "Where are your parents?" mentioned places in Asia Minor. What Justin tells the judge also gives us a glimpse of a preacher's work, when Christianity was an underground movement:

I live above one Martin, in Bath Street. . . . This is the second time I have been in Rome. I do not know any other meeting than Martin's. If anyone wished to come to me, I passed on to him the doctrines of the truth.

By 200 there was a Latin translation of the Bible. Long before that, there had been in Rome Christians of Roman stock, some most notable. As early as the persecution described in the Book of Revelation (c. 95), Flavius Clemens, the emperor's cousin, was martyred and his wife exiled. By 250, Christians were so numerous that they were divided into seven districts, with 46 presbyters, and no less than 1,500 "whom the grace and philanthropy of the Master support." In South Italy there were 100 bishops at this time. In the north, Christians were fewer. Thus our main impression is of a church with Greek culture but developing a Roman discipline, gaining influential members, glorying in its apostolic tradition, and conscious of its responsibilities as the one Great See of the west.

We have already quoted Justin about Christian travelers and traders carrying their religion with them. In Gaul (France), we find just that—Christianity spreading along the trade routes, especially in the cities of the south and along the valley of the river Rhone. Among 48 martyrs of Lyons and Vienne in 177, there are both Latin and Greek names. The bishop, Irenaeus, who came to shepherd what remained of the stricken flock, is a remarkable example of the catholic spirit. He grew up in Greek-speaking Smyrna, came to serve the church here at Lyons in the Latin-speaking end of the empire, and learned to preach to his local people in Celtic (Gallic). Also he was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, so these words of his are worth thinking about:

The Church, although scattered in the whole world, guards the Faith as if it lived in one house; believes

as if it had but one heart; preaches as if it had but one mouth. And, although there are different languages in the world, the tradition is one and the same.

Paul had hoped to travel by way of Rome to Spain. It may be that Christianity itself had come by that route to the Romanized cities on the south and east coasts. The one great figure produced by the Spanish Church was Hosius, bishop of Cordova, who suffered in the final persecutions but lived on to be over a hundred years old (c. 256–357). Tertullian (c. 190) claimed that “places of the Britons unreached by the Romans are subject to the law of Christ.” We have undoubted evidence in the presence of bishops of London, York, and one other See at the Synod of Arles, 314.

Britain and Spain have an unexpected connection with the coming of the first Christian emperor. Constantine happened to be at York in 306 when his royal father died. He was proclaimed emperor there, but there were other claimants to the throne. Constantine traveled through Gaul and Spain. Then, in 312, before the decisive battle with his last rival just outside Rome, he saw a vision of the cross and heard a voice, “In this sign conquer!” He regarded his victory as due to the Christians’ God, and sent for Bishop Hosius to come and advise him how to rule as a Christian. Perhaps it was at Cordova in Spain that Hosius had already begun to influence Constantine toward the Christian faith.

The Religion of the Empire. The new situation under the pro-Christian Constantine ultimately affected the whole empire. It began in the west, with the so-called Edict of Milan, 313, announcing toleration “to Christians and all others,” with especial reference to Christians and to the restoring of property taken from Christians. In 330 came the climax—the founding of a new capital, Constantinople, Christian from the start, in the most easterly tip of Eu-

ropean territory. From Constantinople, Constantine wrote to one of the bishops:

Because of the great numbers joining the Church in the city which is called by my name . . . the number of churches must be increased. I order 50 copies of the Scriptures . . . to be written on parchment . . . with as little delay as possible. You can have two public conveyances, and you are to send a deacon with them for me to inspect, and I will give a generous donation. God keep you, brother.

This illustrates, as well as one incident can, the whole new position. "Great numbers": Christianity, which before was persecuted, had become fashionable. New churches: church building not only increased, but soon became the most significant of all building. The emperor's interest meant support from the resources of the state. Some have fixed upon the accompanying evils, and said that the conversion of Constantine did more harm than good—nominal Christians with lowered standards, outward pomp, state interference. The changed situation did mean a new set of temptations. As a persecuted minority movement, the church had often been tempted to be too otherworldly. As the imperial state church, it was now tempted to worldliness.

Christianity had now been accepted as the official religion by three areas: in Asia there was Armenia; in Africa, Ethiopia; while the Roman Empire covered all the Mediterranean lands. In the first two countries the Christian deposit would be kept, but in the third, the Christian deposit would become the basis of European civilization. Europeans, though outclassed by the Arabs in the seventh and eighth centuries and by the Mongols in the thirteenth and fourteenth, were to prove remarkable for their out-reaching across the world. By them Christianity would not only be kept; *it would be carried*.

Outlasting the Roman Empire. Even in the second and third centuries the Romans were uneasy about the German tribes north of the Danube and east of the Rhine. In the fourth century, pressure on these frontiers increased. In the fifth century, the frontiers broke down. In 406, Jerome, then a monk in Bethlehem, wrote:

Savage tribes in countless numbers have overrun the whole of Gaul. From the Alps to the Pyrenees, from the Rhine to the Atlantic, all has been laid waste. . . . And whom the sword from without spares, famine ravages within. . . . I cannot speak without tears.

The northern barbarians had already been influenced by Christianity. For example, in the year 264, a band of Goths raided Cappadocia and carried back with them, over the Black Sea, Christians to be their slaves:

These pious captives, by their intercourse with the barbarians, brought over large numbers to the true faith. . . . Among the captives were the ancestors of Ulfilas himself.

Ulfilas became bishop of the Goths in 341. He was the first to do one thing that has since been done by missionaries in many parts of the world. In order to translate the Scriptures, he had to find letters in which to write a language hitherto unwritten. His translation of the Bible brings the first book to the peoples of northern Europe. Not only the Goths but many other tribes admired the empire which they were endangering. In many cases they adopted Christianity because it belonged to this higher civilization. And so when the Goths captured the city of Rome in the year 410, and people in flight from Italy asked why Christianity had not saved the empire, Augustine was able to reply, in his book *The City of God*, that the horrors of war were not new, but

what was new was that the largest churches were chosen and set apart as refuge [for women and children]. Whoever does not see that this was because of Christianity is blind.

The fact that so many of the barbarians were Christians, of however crude a kind, meant that when the Western Roman Empire passed away, Christianity remained, the foundation of the new civilization which through the Dark Ages (500–1000) would slowly be built up.

New Expansion in the Northwest. Only the most northerly of the invaders were quite untouched by Christianity—the Franks and the English. Here in the northwest the church might seem to have little chance of survival. Yet at this very time of breakdown, its survival was being ensured. In 405, Patrick, a young British Christian, was carried to Ireland by heathen raiders as a slave. Years later he escaped, but he was not to be left at home in peace:

I thought I heard the voice of them that lived beside the wood which is nigh unto the western sea, and they cried as with one mouth, "Holy youth, come and walk among us once more." . . . Thanks be to God that after many years the Lord granted to them according to their cry.

He went as missionary-bishop to Ireland, 432–461. While the heathen English were burning churches, in Ireland monks were being prepared who in the next century would recross the Irish Sea for the conversion of Scotland, of the heathen English themselves, and of many on the mainland of Europe.

Also, in the year 496, the bishop of Rheims baptized Clovis, king of the Franks—largely through the influence of his Christian wife—with 3,000 of his warriors. In his

sermon the bishop said that they were “adoring what they had burned,” the cross, and “burning what they had adored,” their idols.

From these most recently converted lands of the far northwest, Christianity was soon to be carried more widely over northern Europe than it had ever been before.

chapter 3

A.D. 500-950: Setbacks West and East, with Some Compensations

ONE FORCE contributing to the downfall of western civilization was the Huns. Nomad horsemen from Mongolia, they proved themselves destroyers on a world scale. Invading China, they had brought down the Han Dynasty, and China's Dark Ages had begun, A.D. 200-600. Another branch of the Huns in 475 destroyed the Gupta Empire in North India. Yet other Huns entered Europe, to disturb the German tribes and then themselves to threaten Rome in 452.

Soon after 600, two world powers were emerging—*China* was reviving her ancient glories under the T'ang Dynasty; and *the Arabs* were about to break forth, west and east, in conquest and migration. As for religion in all this, in China Buddhism, originally from India, was coming to its greatest strength. The Arab movement would be inspired by Muhammad's new religion of Islam. What of Christianity?

The downfall of western civilization and the rise of Islam meant for Christianity the most serious setbacks in all its

history. We have seen three areas accept Christianity as the official religion—Armenia, Ethiopia, and the Roman Empire. Only the last represented a major civilization—and by about 500 this had come to an end in western Europe. Islam, emerging in 622, was to be Christianity's most serious rival. We shall look at these two setbacks, and then turn in more detail to certain movements of advance which, placed over against them, may be called compensations. They are: the conversion of northern Europe by the Latin section of the church; the winning of the Slavs chiefly by the Greek section; and the carrying of Christianity across Asia by the Syriac section.

The End of Roman Civilization in Western Europe

Life became local and tribal again. Highways fell into disrepair, cities dwindled in population. There were pirates on the sea. Within the ruins of the old, a new feudal society was beginning. This too was local, based on the land a man tilled, with services due to an overlord and protection given by him. The one thing in life which maintained wider interests was religion. Christianity, as we have seen, survived. The southern German tribes were touched by it before crossing into the empire, and the most vigorous of the northern, the Franks, were converted in 496 soon after settling in Gaul. This surviving Christianity was itself shut in by ignorance and violence; and yet, because it was Christianity, it pointed beyond such limitations. The local church or monastery might be at the mercy of the feudal lord, but what happened in church was not local but universal. Church rules (Canon Law) were based on Roman law. Among clergy and monks were those who still spoke and read and copied Latin. They looked to Rome as being still the capital of western Christendom. Christianity was to be the chief factor in civilizing Europe; already it was pointing toward a brighter future. However, in contrast with the first five centuries of advance, this is a period of

struggle for survival and of continuing conflict with the darkness of the Dark Ages.

The Rise of Islam

Like the uplands of Asia, home of the Huns, the deserts of Arabia have periodically poured their surplus population into more fertile territory around. One such migration in the seventh century is different from all earlier ones, because it coincided with a religious movement. The Arabs left their crude nature-worship, and learned to say, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God." We have noted the spread of Christianity in lands around Arabia, and in Arabia itself. Muhammad, in the beginnings of this new religion, Islam ("Submission"), owed much to both Jews and Christians. The Jew's word for God is *Elohim*. Syriac-speaking Christians say *Alaha*. The Muslim's Arabic word, *Allah*, is related to both. According to the Koran it was the archangel Gabriel who gave Muhammad his commission. The word *Koran* itself is a Christian Syriac term for the reading of the lesson in church. Muhammad claimed to be in line with the Old Testament prophets, and acknowledged Jesus as Prophet before him. Had there been a stronger Christian witness, this Arab movement might have meant a mass conversion of this vigorous people to Christianity. Instead, in 622, Islam emerged as a rival religion. Ten years later the Arabs began to sweep across Palestine, Syria, Egypt. In less than a century they had begun to obliterate the Christianity of North Africa, had occupied Spain, and were invading France; at the same time they had crossed from Asia Minor to eastern Europe and were threatening Constantinople. West and east, Christendom looked as if it were being crushed in a huge pincer movement. Christian victories at Constantinople in 718, and Tours in France in 732, saved the situation, and for the time set limits to Islam's advance at the Taurus mountains in the east and

the Pyrenees in the west. Spain was not to be wholly recovered till the fifteenth century. In Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, dwindling Christian minorities survive today in a strongly Muslim society (see Map II, page 56). Let us turn from these setbacks to the compensations.

The Conversion of Northern Europe

Just before 500, a boy of fourteen, at school in Rome, was shocked by the city's immorality and went off to live as an ascetic in a cave. This may sound a small matter compared with the rise and fall of empires, but it is the beginning of a revival of western Christianity. The boy was Benedict. As a monk, he was to bring monasticism to its full development.

Romans were not inventive thinkers; their strength lay in organization and discipline. Benedict's was a typically Roman contribution to a movement which had hitherto been largely Coptic and Greek. Of the three monastic ideals of poverty, chastity, and obedience, Benedict stressed obedience. He established his monastery on Monte Cassino, a high crag 75 miles southeast of Rome, destroying a temple to the sun god which still stood there. He showed what a monk's life could be when properly regulated. Roman discipline was often harsh; Benedict's discipline was softened by Christian sympathy and concern for the individual. His "Rule," given c. 529, begins by saying that the aim is "to found a school for the service of God in which, we trust, nothing too heavy or rigorous will be established." Monks must obey their abbot ("abba" = "father") in all things; but the abbot is told to consult with the older monks, and in important matters with the whole community. The monks' day was to be a busy one, for "idleness is the enemy of the soul," but the day's duties were well balanced. Benedict allows eight hours for sleep, one for meals, seven for manual work in kitchen or in field, four for study, and four for worship, these last being a cycle of

eight periods through day and night—"the canonical hours." The Rule of Benedict soon became, and has remained, the standard for western monasticism.

One generation later, a young aristocrat, chief magistrate of the city of Rome, gave his family property for the founding of monasteries, and in one of them, on the site of his former home, himself lived as a monk. This was Gregory, who in 590 became Pope. If Benedictine monks were disciplined soldiers for the church, Gregory was the strategist who knew how and where to use them.

Gregory sought to make the new populations of Europe just becoming Christian—Goths in Spain, Lombards in Italy, Franks in Gaul—look to Rome as the Christian capital. Everywhere he called for the correction of abuses among clergy and monks, and for the more complete conversion of the people. He organized a mission to the English, the most northerly among the invaders of the empire, and as yet heathen. For missionaries he looked to the monastery where he himself had lived, and chose a monk called Augustine as leader. He had a thought-out plan for the conversion of the whole country and its division into two archbishoprics. Temples were to be turned into churches, and pagan feasts into Christian festivals. Gregory wrote:

He who tries to mount to the highest place, must go up by steps and not by leaps.

As to the means of entry, King Ethelbert of Kent, the southernmost of the seven small kingdoms into which England was then divided, had married Bertha, a Christian Frank. Gregory relied upon her to open the door to his missionaries. He often seems to have made use of a Christian queen. He used to write to the queen of the Franks and to the queen of the Lombards, claiming their influence to help his reforms. Indeed, in a coronation service

attributed to Gregory, as the crown is placed on the queen's head, the bishop is instructed to pray "that she may be enabled to call barbarous nations to the knowledge of the truth." So often had Gregory known the decisive influence of women in matters of religion.

At Canterbury the king allowed Augustine to take over the Church of St. Martin, which had survived from before the coming of the English. There, on Whitsunday, June 2, 597, the king himself was baptized. So began the conversion of southern England.

On the following Sunday, June 9, in the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland, there died the aged Columba, the pioneer of the Celtic mission. In 432 Patrick had taken Christianity from pre-English Britain to Ireland; from Ireland in 563 Columba brought Christianity to Scotland. The Celtic missionaries had no statesmanlike pope behind them. Ireland was out of touch with Rome. Nor had they themselves any thought-out plan of campaign. Of Columba his biographer says, "He desired to go on pilgrimage for the sake of Christ." Many Celtic missionaries began as wandering ascetics, rather than as purposeful missionaries. However, Columba landed on Iona with twelve disciples; and his contemporary, Columbanus, did the same in France. They were following the pattern of our Lord and his Twelve, so we must not say that they wandered without a sense of mission.

On Iona, Columba built his monastery, a settlement of simple huts. Here he and his men worked as farmers and fishermen, read their books and made more by copying them, and said their prayers at the canonical hours. From this base they made missionary tours, and sometimes a group of monks would stay and make a new settlement. The most important of these was in Northumbria, the most northeasterly of the English kingdoms. Its king had had to flee from his enemies and found refuge with the monks on Iona. When he won back his throne, he appealed to them

for missionaries. In 635, Aidan came, and the king gave him a small island—it can be reached on foot at low tide—to make into a second Iona. It is called Holy Island to this day. Bede (673–735) gives us this picture:

It was delightful to see the King interpreting the word of God to his counsellors and lords, for he had perfectly learned the language of the Scots during his long banishment.

The greater part of England was converted, not by the Benedictines from the south, but by this northern mission. Yet in the year 664 the English Church decided on full relationship with Rome. Thus England, instead of being left in a Celtic backwater, came into the main stream of European life. This was to benefit England, and, to a surprising degree, to benefit Europe as well.

A benefit to England was soon seen. In 668 the Pope sent to Canterbury an archbishop who did much to strengthen the organization of dioceses (areas of a bishop's rule), which had been weak under the Celtic monks. This archbishop is a striking illustration, on the one hand, of the service which the church can render to a nation; and on the other hand, of the supranational character of the church. For Bede says of him, "This was the first archbishop whom all the English Church obeyed." One has to wait till nearly 800 before anyone is called "King of the English," and more than 250 years beyond that before national unity is secure. The English Church prepared the way for the unity of the English nation. Yet, surprisingly enough, the archbishop who achieved this was Theodore of Tarsus, a Greek from the birthplace of Paul, and the helper he brought with him was Abbot Hadrian, "by nation an African" (i.e., born in Tunisia).

The benefit which England brought to Europe can best be seen in the English missionaries. Within a century Eng-

land had ceased to be a mission field and had become a missionary base for the conversion of northern Europe. In 690, Willibrord and eleven other monks from the monastery at Ripon set out for the Netherlands. Here again, though not this time twelve and a leader, is the apostolic pattern. Compared with Columba, however, Willibrord had more knowledge of the place to which he went, and a more definite missionary purpose in going. The Franks were expanding their territory eastward, back toward the lands from which their ancestors had come 200 years before. Willibrord worked under the Franks' protection and patronage for fifty years, and he saw the church firmly established. He is rightly called the Apostle of the Netherlands, and is that country's patron saint.

Still greater as a missionary is Boniface of Crediton. He went in 716 from a monastery near Winchester. He was then a man of forty, distinguished as a scholar, a leading churchman, and invited to become abbot of his monastery. He was of a vigorous and adventurous nature, but it was more than love of adventure—a true missionary vocation—which led him to turn his back on a promising career at home and go off to the Netherlands. After serving his apprenticeship under Willibrord, he moved on into South and Central Germany—which also was becoming Frankish territory at this time. Here Christianity was already present, but it was weak and in disorder. Boniface's energies were divided between reform among people already called Christians, and missions to the heathen. To the first task the Pope had called him; it was the second which was nearer to his heart. In 724 at Geismar he hewed down an ancient oak tree, sacred to the gods, while non-Christians watched in awful silence, expecting the lightning to flash and smite him. Instead, after a few strokes of Boniface's axe, there came a gust of wind to speed the tree's destruction. He had the timber cut up, and the logs built into a chapel. This symbolized the downfall of non-Christian

religion in Central Germany. The method of Boniface was to found small monastic settlements as missionary outposts among the pagans. Some of these grew into great monasteries, like that of Fulda where Boniface was to be buried.

At the age of seventy-eight he retired from the Archbishopric of Mainz, but not to rest. His purpose was to return to the Netherlands, the mission field where he first began. On June 5, 755, after a missionary tour, he was preparing to confirm some of his converts when an armed band attacked his party. Many years afterward an old woman recorded that as a girl she had been there and had seen him hold the book he had been reading above his head when he was struck down. A book with a sword-cut deep into its 140 parchment pages, and with bloodstains upon them, is among the relics at Fulda. The book contains two sermons by Ambrose of Milan (c. 390). One is on the Holy Spirit, and the other is called "How good it is to die." Boniface was reading the first to be ready for his confirmations; he was reading the second, also to be ready.

The power of the Franks came to its height under King Charlemagne (688–814). Other Franks had encouraged missionaries to work in their newly won lands. Charlemagne went further; as he conquered Saxony, he compelled the Saxons to be baptized. This is the first recorded case of forced baptism, one of many signs that some of the darkness of the Dark Ages had got into the church itself. Charlemagne's kingdom was the largest area brought under one rule since the passing of the Western Roman Empire. It seemed like that Christian empire restored. And so on Christmas day in the year 800 the Pope crowned Charlemagne "Emperor of the Romans." The continuing Eastern Roman Empire was indignant at this (as it seemed to them) pretense at empire in the west.

There was still much of darkness to be endured in the west during the next 150 years. Here are four examples:

1. *Empire*. After 843, Charlemagne's empire was divided. No one appeared as a unifying force, worthy to be called emperor, for another hundred years.

2. *Papacy*. The darkness of the Dark Ages reached the very center of the church. The papacy, with no Christian empire to protect it, became a prize for which unworthy men competed, and which they held precariously, rather with the idea of enjoying its wealth than of fulfilling its works. Between 850 and 950 there were twenty-seven popes, and the quick succession was marked by conspiracy and violence.

3. *Northmen*. All through the ninth century, pirates from Scandinavia were ravaging the coasts, especially of northern Europe. They plundered churches and monasteries. Perhaps their greatest crime was their destruction of that Irish Christian civilization which had played so large a part in Europe's recovery hitherto. Bands of the Northmen settled, most notably in eastern England (the Dane-law), and in northern France (Normandy).

4. *Hungarians*. There were other non-Christian peoples of lower cultural level on Christendom's eastern frontier. Most numerous were the Slavs; but most formidable, the Hungarians. Mongol horsemen, like the earlier Huns, about the year 900 they were threatening both Central Europe and the Balkans.

The title of this chapter implies that this period of setbacks ended about 950. That is the approximate time at which something better was promised with regard to all four situations:

1. *Empire*. Charlemagne had been a Frank who conquered Germany. It was in the (German) eastern, not the (French) western, end of his former territories that some-

thing like imperial unity next emerged, and this was acknowledged when in 962 the Pope crowned Otto I as "Roman Emperor."

2. *Papacy*. A movement for the reform of monasteries and church was growing, with its most notable center in the monastery of Cluny, founded 910. By 1047 begins a succession of popes having, and expressing, high ideals for their office.

3. *Northmen*. The year after the crowning of Otto (962), there was born one of the greatest of the Northmen, Olaf Tryggvason. During a raid on England he would be converted, and return as Christian king of Norway and of other northern lands.

4. *Hungarians*. Otto I saved Central Europe from these marauders by defeating them in 955. Missionaries began to enter Hungary itself. Some of their chieftains accepted the Christian faith, most notably Geisa (d. 997) under whom the Hungarians began to settle down as a nation. In 1000, Geisa's son was crowned king, Stephen I, the Pope himself sending a crown for him. Hungary's first king, he became also that country's patron saint.

Yes, just around the year 950 the corner is turned.

The Winning of the Slavs

The Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and the Greek section of the church suffered less permanent loss than the Western through the migrations of the German tribes in the fifth century. They were, however, the chief sufferers through the rise of Islam in the seventh. Shut in to east and south by the Arab power, there was only one direction in which it was possible for them to expand—to the north. From the north a further wave of migration was pressing upon the Balkan peninsula, this time mostly Slavs. As with the earlier Germans, some of these settlers were recruited into the imperial armies; they accepted something

of Greek civilization, and often their leaders were not unwilling to listen to the claims of the empire's religion.

The greatest names for missionary work among the Slavs are those of two brothers, born in Thessalonica: Constantine (also known as Cyril) and Methodius. Ratislav, prince of a Slav people in Moravia, sent to the emperor at Constantinople a request for missionaries, and in 862 these two were sent. This was an area of German influence, and German missionaries were already at work from the Church of the West. The two Greeks brought some ideas which were different. Both are said to have had experience as missionaries in what is now South Russia. They came prepared to do for the Slavs what Ulfilas had done for the Germans themselves, that is, put their language into writing. Strangely enough the Germans opposed their use of a Slavonic liturgy. The Latin section of the church had lost that concern for translation which marked the early church and regarded Latin as the only language for Bible and liturgy. The Greeks were more adaptable in this. A serious clash occurred, so the brothers went to Rome to seek, and win, the Pope's approval. There Constantine died in 869. Methodius returned to fifteen more years in Moravia. He was made bishop and later archbishop. He completed the Slavonic Bible and translated the writings of many of the Greek Fathers. Thus two missionaries of the Greek Church had come to be connected with the Latin Church, and had begun the creation of a Slav section within it. Rigid Latin ways were in the end to triumph in Moravia; yet Slav Christians elsewhere would look to these missionaries as the givers of their Bible and liturgy, indeed as the originators of their whole literature.

At the same time, the Greek Church was winning its way among the South Slavs (Serbians) of the Balkans, and in Bulgaria where the population was largely Slav. German and Byzantine political influences competed to claim the Bulgarians, and similarly, in religion, Latin and Greek

forms of Christianity were both in the field. Their king chose to favor now one, now the other, till in 870 Bulgaria came to belong once and for all to the Greek sphere. Clergy from Moravia, driven out because of reaction against the Slav language there, were welcomed in Bulgaria. And so the work of Methodius came back to the section of the church to which he originally belonged. Through the king's support, the ideals of Methodius could here be realized and Christianity come to full Slavonic expression.

In the year 954, the widow of the archduke of Kiev was baptized a Christian. Here again, so near in time to other momentous happenings set down already, we see a turning point in history. This woman was grandmother of Vladimir, under whom the archduchy would accept Christianity as its official religion; and the Archduchy of Kiev is the state which later is to grow into Russia. If the Greek section of the church was estranged from the Latin west, and shut in by Islam to east and south, at the one point of the compass open to it a notable field for new developments had been found.

The Carrying of Christianity across Asia

Our following of the eastward progress of Christianity stopped with the evidence of Cosmas about India and Ceylon around the year 520. We hear of a further migration of Persian Christians to Malabar in the year 825. The party came to Quilon, led by a merchant named Marwan Sabrisho, and two bishops, Mar Sapor and Mar Aprot. Copper plates, on which are engraved charters of privileges granted to this foreign community, are preserved in South India. They were guardians of the standard weights and measures, enjoyed the collection of certain dues and remission of others, and shared in control of prices and of trade. Privileges such as these doubtless increased the prestige of Christians, but they would also separate them

as a privileged class, into which there would be little thought of admitting outsiders. A stone cross dug up at Mailapur, traditional tomb of Thomas, in 1547, bears a Pahlavi (old Persian) inscription saying that it was "cut by Afras, son of Chaharbukht the Syrian." Some have suggested that Afras and Aprut may be the same.

Christians were not only crossing the Arabian Sea; they were pushing eastward on the land routes, and some not as merchants but as missionaries. About 520, we hear of missionaries of the Church of the East among a branch of the Huns who had settled in Bactria. Here again the church contributed a script to people who hitherto had known no letters. In this case Syriac letters were used, and Syriac influence is traceable behind Mongolian and Manchu. Thus, not only northern Europe and the Slav peoples, but parts of eastern Asia too, have the church to thank for the gift of writing.

In 550 the catholicos at Ctesiphon consecrated a bishop for the Huns of Bactria. The Syriac record says that the request came through an embassy to the Persian emperor, who "was amazed at the power of Jesus, and that even the Christian Huns acknowledged the Catholicos as their Head." A catholicos who ruled the church a century later could claim

more than 20 bishops and two archbishops in the East. . . . None of them came to us for many years, but we know that in spite of the long distance they fulfil their office. . . . We write to them and they to us.

At this very time, China under the great T'ang Dynasty was again exerting her influence over the small states of Central Asia. It is not surprising that missionaries already working east of Persia should have traveled on with those—nobles, ambassadors, merchants, students—who set out

across mountain and desert to the Chinese capital, Ch'ang-An (Map I). In 1625 a slab of granite nine feet long was unearthed there. It is surmounted by a cross, and entitled "Tablet of the spread of Syrian Illustrious [the name chosen for 'Christian'] Religion to China." Unlike the Indian cross, this heads a long inscription. It contains this record:

There was in Syria [probably meaning Persia] a Bishop named Alopen. . . . He rode through hardship and danger and in the ninth year of Cheng-kuan [635] arrived at Ch'ang-An. . . . The Emperor received him as guest in the Palace. The Scriptures were translated in the Imperial Library, and their doctrine examined by the Emperor himself. Knowing full well that it was right and true, the Emperor expressly commanded its propagation.

The toleration edict which follows on the tablet is recorded independently in official histories. The emperor granted them a monastery in the capital to house twenty-one monks. Several more monasteries seem to have been built in the course of the next reign. Christians in China fell into disfavor from about 700. Their religion had been tolerated on arrival as a religion from Persia. Persia had long been overrun by the Arabs—the last of its Sasanian Dynasty dying a refugee in China in 707. Persia was now extinct, so Persian Christianity seemed to the Chinese to be of no further significance. Actually the Church in Persia had suffered no loss by coming under the rule of a Muslim khalif. Christians were the chief civilizers of the new Arab state, and held positions of trust and influence in the new capital, Bagdad. We find a Christian bishop attached to an embassy from the khalifate to China in 732. Soon afterward the Chinese emperor renewed his patronage of the church and changed its official title from "Persian" (now

defunct) to "Syrian Illustrious Religion." The tablet was set up in 781, and it records confidence in the good influences of Christianity:

If the Empire is tranquil,
if men are able to act rightly,
if the living are able to prosper,
if the dead are able to rejoice. . . .
such is the mighty task and active energy
of our Illustrious Religion.

It especially praises a Christian from Balkh who had won high honor in the imperial service, but had used all his wealth for the endowment of churches and monasteries.

This was the period of the T'ang Dynasty's decline. In 845 there began a short persecution of "foreign religions." A total of 260,500 Buddhist monks and nuns were compelled to "return to the world," with Christian and Zoroastrian monks together numbered at 3,000. Buddhism soon recovered; we may doubt whether the small Christian community found recovery easy. More disasters followed. By 878 rebellion was ruining South China and bringing to an end its sea-borne trade. The land routes westward, always hazardous, were becoming impassable owing to the empire's decline. Thus Christians were cut off from their home base. For 200 years Christianity had hung on as a minority religion. An eighth-century Chinese document claims that it had 530 writings in Syriac, 35 of which had by then been translated into Chinese. Among those mentioned we can recognize the names Moses, Elijah, David, Paul, the words "Gospel" and "Breviary." One translation has survived, and a worthy one, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, in rhymed Chinese at once faithful to the Syriac version, and full of the literary allusions dear to the Chinese scholar. So, while Christianity was spoken of as "Syrian" and treated as a foreign religion, it must have been more than

the property of a foreign community, though bishops, abbots, benefactors, even the chief translator, are mentioned as from Persia or from Balkh. Buddhism, destined to remain one of the chief religions of China, had been similarly foreign-led during its first 200 years, and (as we have seen) was attacked as foreign as late as 845. Buddhism, however, had the good fortune to arrive in China 500 years ahead of Christianity, had established itself during the discontent of China's Dark Ages, had come to its strength with the T'ang Dynasty renaissance, and was strong enough to withstand both a short persecution and the long period of disorder at that dynasty's close. Alas for the contrast! Soon after the year 900 we lose trace of Christianity in China.

However, an achievement which does not endure is still an achievement. Until 718 in eastern Europe, and 732 in western Europe, there may well have been doubt whether Christianity there would survive the triumphant advance of Islam. In 781, Christians in China were (to quote a Syriac portion of the inscription) "erecting a stone tablet whereon are inscribed the law of the Saviour and the teaching of the Fathers to the Rulers of China." And who was to know *what* would endure? Even to us who do know the outcome, it is something to recall that in 635, the year when Aidan came to the small English kingdom of Northumbria, the Christian religion had also completed its journey across Asia, reached the capital of this great civilization, and in this greatest period of China's history had at least been present to stake its claim.

chapter 4

A.D. 950-1350: Advance Resumed

THERE ARE four things to be said about this period; and, conveniently for remembering, they can be marked with dates a century apart:

1. The conversion of northern Europe was almost completed by about 1000.

2. The first answer to the challenge of Islam was offered about 1100. The answer was neither decisive nor fully Christian, but at least western Christendom had sufficiently emerged from the Dark Ages to feel that it could do something about the Muslim menace.

3. The Friars found a more excellent way, soon after 1200. Better than the Crusades, this movement of renewed Christian zeal came to express itself in missions in North Africa and the east.

4. The chance given to the church to win the Mongol rulers of Asia, just before 1300, seems to have been one of the biggest missionary opportunities of all time.

The Conversion of Northern Europe Completed

Denmark. The pioneer missionary had been Anskar, who in 826 came from a monastery in northern France

with a missionary tradition inherited from Columbanus and his Celtic monks. The king of the Franks was Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious. He got Anskar appointed archbishop of Hamburg, and hoped to see, under his leadership, the conversion of all the northern lands. That was a noble dream, but far removed from the grim realities of this ninth century. From Denmark and Norway heathen Northmen, so far from yielding to Christian persuasion, were sailing to Christian lands to pillage and destroy. Denmark saw Christianity firmly established only with the coming of King Cnut. He was the younger son of a Danish king, and in 1016 became king of England, most of which the Danes had at this time conquered. He reigned as a Christian and a zealous one, and when two years later his brother died and left him the throne of Denmark too, he took with him many from England to strengthen the Christian cause there.

Norway. A Christian hermit in the Scilly Isles, off the southwestern tip of England, so impressed a gigantic pirate, Olaf Tryggvason, that he and his comrades asked him to baptize them. Olaf had been leading raids on the English coasts, but now he sailed back to England for the bishop of Winchester to confirm him. In the year 995 he returned as a Christian to claim the crown of Norway. He was still a violent man; but instead of burning Christian churches abroad he now destroyed idol temples at home, and, when he failed to persuade, offered to do battle with unbelievers. By about 1000 the nominal conversion of Norway was complete, and with Norway went her territories of Iceland and Greenland.

Sweden. King Olaf brought to Norway bishops and priests from England. One of these, Sigfrid, after Olaf's death in the year 1000, is said to have moved to Sweden, where also the king had accepted Christianity. Other Eng-

lishmen gave their services, and some of them gave their lives, in a cause which in Sweden took longer to establish. Not till about 1100 was the Christian victory sure.

Russia. The conversion of Vladimir, archduke of Kiev, took place in 987. "Conversion" may not be the right word, because neither his private nor his public life seems to have been affected. He is said to have kept 800 concubines. The blood of the Northmen was in his veins, and he was ruthless all his life. That which decided him was what he saw of neighboring states to south and west, where a higher civilization centered round the Christian religion. However nominal the ruler's conversion, it did secure the future for Christianity in Russia. Unlike the other northern peoples, the Russians received Christianity in its Greek form. After the Mongol invasion of 1240, Christianity became firmly established as belonging to Russian culture, that which distinguished the Russians from the Mongols.

The Challenge of Islam Answered

The Seljuk Turks were moving westward from their home in the high lands of Central Asia, accepting Islam for their religion as they came. By 1055 their leader had been acknowledged sultan (victor) of Bagdad. The khalif (successor, i.e., of Muhammad) remained, but as religious leader, not head of the state. Next the Seljuks overran the Arab-ruled countries of Syria and Palestine. Then in 1071 in Armenia they met a Byzantine army and destroyed it, taking the emperor prisoner. Asia Minor lay defenseless before them, and across the narrow waters the capital of Greek Christianity, Constantinople. What could stop this resurgence of conquering Islam?

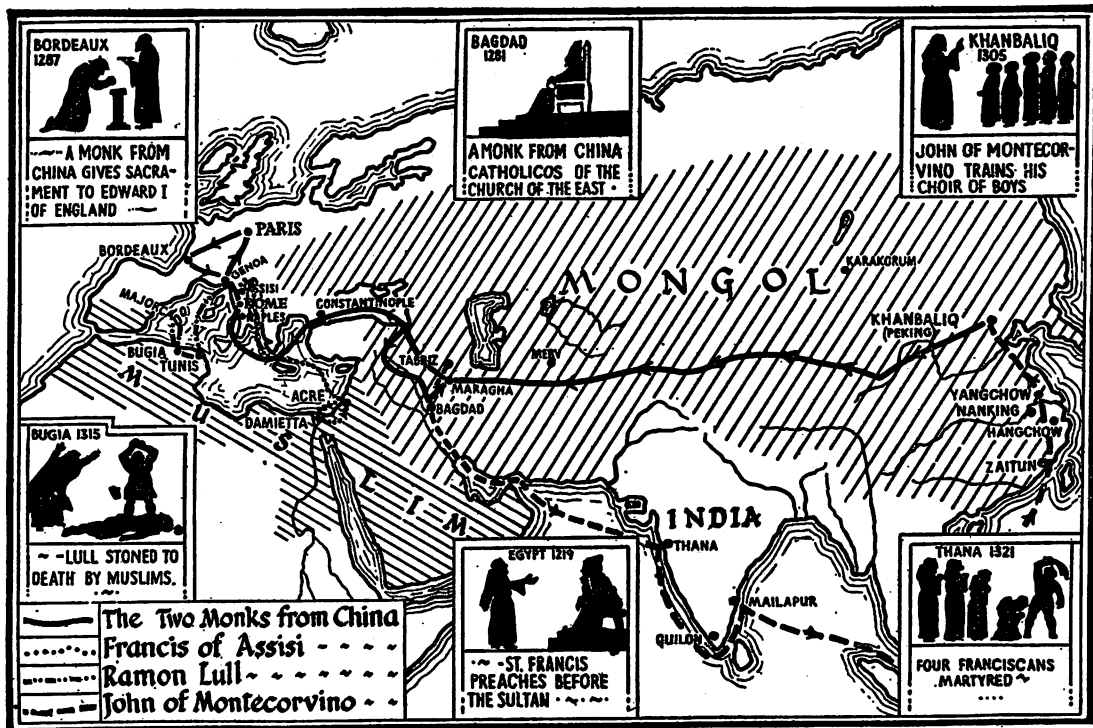
The only hope lay in the west, where Norman-French (i.e., Northmen settled in northern France) were at this very time expelling the Muslim invader from Sicily, and where Christian states in northern Spain were weakening

the hold of Islam. In 1095, Pope Urban II launched the Crusades. He broadened the aim—not just to protect Constantinople from the Seljuks, but to drive the unbeliever out of the Holy Land:

Refrain your murderous hands from killing your brethren. As soldiers of the Faith, turn your hand against foreign nations, and under Jesus Christ your Leader, as a Christian army, an army invincible, better than the Israelites of old, ye shall do battle for your Jerusalem, and attack and expel the Turks there, who are worse than the Jebusites.

The crowd to whom Pope Urban spoke shouted, "It is the will of God." In parts of France and Germany enthusiasm was fanned by popular preachers. Men sold their farms, put their families and a few household goods into the ox-wagon, and joined a growing company straggling eastward. This "People's Crusade" led to nothing but death or slavery for the adventurers. The Crusades were the first movement to capture the imagination of the common people, now that the west had emerged from its own Dark Ages into the wider world. Crusading enthusiasm—often mixed with love of adventure and hope of gain—was to be roused again and again during the next 200 years.

The first Crusade proper began in 1096. The greater part of its armies were French, especially Norman-French. As a result, all through western Asia and as far as India, to this day the word used for "European" is "Ferengi"—which is "Frank." The crusaders won back most of Asia Minor for the Byzantine emperor. In 1099 they captured Jerusalem itself. In Syria and Palestine they set up a group of Latin states centering round Edessa, Antioch, Tripoli, and Jerusalem. These were ruled and garrisoned from the west. But how were they to be maintained? Within 50 years they were in serious danger from the resurgent forces of Islam, and were calling for reinforcements. So further



Crusades were organized. The most imposing was the third, in 1190, when the kings of Germany, France, and England themselves went out. The most tragic was the fourth Crusade, in 1204. Armies from the west were diverted to attack Constantinople—Latin Christian against Greek Christian, instead of both against Islam. This act of brigandage fatally weakened the Eastern Roman Empire and contributed to its doom. It is also the most scandalous instance in all history of division among Christians. Before the end of this thirteenth century the Crusades were acknowledged to have failed as military expeditions, and the original crusading enthusiasm was spent. The one permanent gain was that the limited west had been brought into touch with the continuing higher civilization of the Greeks, and with the heritage of civilization which the Muslim East enjoyed. Western Europeans would never again be content to be shut off from this wider world. Indeed some of them would prove how wide the world really was, and, not content with the eastern Mediterranean, would push on to the shores of the China Sea. And—this matters more—some would show a better way of adventuring in this wide world for Christ.

The Friars Find a More Excellent Way

Francis, a merchant's son in northern Italy, in 1209 heard the priest read the gospel for the day, the sending out of the Twelve in Matthew 10. The words which spoke to his heart were verses 7–10. Next day he himself set off without money, wallet, coat, shoes, or staff, and he began to preach. This was the simple origin of the greatest of the Orders of Friars (brothers), the Franciscans. It was a return to apostolic preaching and apostolic poverty, and we should put the preaching first, even as the passage in Matthew begins, "As ye go, preach. . . ." Much that Francis went on to say and do can only be understood if one remembers the ideals of romantic youth at this time—

the knight, devoted to the service of his lady, wielding his sword to protect the weak, and hoping for a chance to "take the cross," that is, join a Crusade. Francis spoke of devotion to his lady, but she was "the Lady Poverty." His hands held no sword, but they served beggars and tended lepers. In 1219, at the risk of his life, he went to Egypt, preaching before the sultan, and trying to win the Holy Land, not by killing the Muslims but by converting them. Five Franciscans on a similar adventure in Morocco were martyred. Of them Francis said, "Now I have five real brothers." In 1221 he added to the rule of his Order:

Whosoever of the brothers, inspired of God, shall desire to go among Muslims and other unbelievers, let them go. . . . And let all the brothers, wherever they may be, remember that they have given themselves and surrendered their bodies to our Lord Jesus Christ, for love of whom they ought to expose themselves to their enemies, both visible and invisible.

That same year, the other great Order of Friars, the Dominicans, meeting at Bologna, accepted as for itself our Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world."

Greatest of all missionaries to Muslims in this thirteenth century was Ramon Lull, who at different times was connected with both Franciscan and Dominican Orders. He was a Spaniard, born in Majorca, which the king of Aragon had won back from the Muslims in Lull's father's time. He became a member of that king's court, living a dissolute life until his conversion in 1263. He now gave himself to this spiritual warfare, but, unlike Francis, he knew that training would be necessary for any successful mission. He became an Arabic scholar, founded in Majorca a college for missionaries, and wrote and preached and lectured about this cause. He visited the great centers of learning, Paris, already as a university a century old, and Montpellier, taking shape as a university about this

time. The mission to the non-Christian world, he believed, should be the first concern of the whole church, claiming its most capable men and a worthy portion of its property. He advocated missions not only to North Africa but to the east, not only to the Muslims but to the Mongols. He knew the Muslims best, however, and said of them, "Once they were converted, it would be a light thing to convert the rest of the world." He himself made three missionary tours—to Tunis in 1292, to Algiers in 1307, and to both places in a third tour begun in 1314. He had established relations of mutual respect with some Muslim leaders, and he had also won a few influential converts. In 1315 at Bugia in Algiers, at the age of eighty-three, he was stoned to death by a mob.

Lull's idea that the whole church should take up this task came to nought. It continued to be the concern of only a few, chiefly from these two Orders, who were scattered over North Africa and, as occasion offered, in Palestine and Syria. Some did go on to the lands of the Mongols.

The Chance to Win the Mongol Rulers of Asia

We have seen that Christianity faded from the China scene about 900. In the year 1009 the bishop of Merv (Map II) wrote to the catholicos of the east about the conversion of the king of the Keraites in northern Mongolia, 2,000 miles to the northeast. Lost in a snowstorm, he had seen in a vision a saint who promised him a safe return "if he became a lamb of the Christian fold." He did get back to his tents and

called to him the Christian merchants who were staying there, and asked them concerning the Faith. He received a gospel from them which he worships daily and now he has asked us by messenger to send a priest.

The whole tribe, with its ruler, became Christian.

When in Palestine and Syria, from about 1144, the forces of Islam began to reverse the triumphs of the first Crusade, people in the west often comforted themselves by talking and writing of a powerful Christian king in the east. They called him Prester John (John the Priest), and believed that he would attack the Muslims in the rear and help to restore the fortunes of Christendom. Hopes like this were repeated from 1145 to 1300, and reappeared in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Most of this early writing was either fiction or forgery. The fact behind it was the presence of the Church of the East among the Keraites and a few other tribes like them. East of the Keraites, and not yet touched by Christianity, were the Mongols. About 1200 they began to drive westward. By 1240 they had crossed Asia as conquerors and pushed into Europe, raiding through Poland, Bohemia, Austria, to the shores of the Adriatic. Europe trembled before the Mongols, as 150 years earlier it had quaked before the Seljuk Turks. The Mongols, however, contented themselves with holding Russia and other territory up to the Danube, as the western end of an empire which for a hundred years covered Asia north of the Himalayas.

Fear of the Mongols, and hopes of finding John the Priest among them, caused popes and kings to send ambassadors, generally friars. The most famous was a Dutch Franciscan, William of Rubruk, who went to the Mongol capital, Karakorum (Map II), in 1252-55. In his writings we find much evidence of Christians, in some places whole tribes, scattered across Central Asia. Among the Mongols themselves, Christians were soon in the highest positions. Genghis, the first Great Khan (emperor) (1206-77), had one of his younger sons married to a Kerait princess. Chinese records say that she was buried "in a figure ten monastery." "Ten" in Chinese is written thus, 十, so this means "a monastery of the cross." Syriac church records say, "She was a true believer like Helen," the mother of

Constantine. Her three sons were Mangu, Hulagu, and Kublai. The first became Great Khan in 1251. The second founded the subsidiary khanate (kingdom) of Persia, and, like his father, married a Christian wife. The third was Great Khan from 1259 to 1294. Kublai forsook the nomad tent-city of Karakorum in Mongolia, and made Peking the capital, renaming it Khanbaliq, "City of the Khan." It was Kublai who gave to Christianity its greatest chance.

Besides ambassadors, there came merchants from the west. Two Venetians, Nicolo and Matteo Polo, in 1269 returned from China, commissioned by Kublai to go to the Pope:

You see that the Christians in these parts [the Church of the East] are so ignorant that they do nothing and have no power . . . but you shall go to your High Priest and shall pray him on our behalf to send me 100 men skilled in your religion. . . . And so I shall be baptized, and then all my barons and great men, and then their subjects. And so there will be more Christians here than there are in your parts.

The Polo brothers in 1271 set out on their second journey east, and the best that the Pope could do was to send with them two Dominicans. Young Marco, a boy of seventeen, for love of adventure, insisted on going too. It was to be 24 years before he saw Venice, his home, again, and most of that time he spent as a trusted official of the Empire of Kublai Khan. If only 100 such adventurers could have been found to go for love of God! Of the two Dominicans, Marco records that they endured as far as Armenia; then, seeing the perils of the journey, "they have great fear to go farther; then they said they will not go at all."

In 1289 the Pope received another request to send missionaries to Kublai. This was from Kublai's grandnephew Arghun, ruler of Persia, who was yet another Mongol with

a Christian wife. John of Montecorvino, a Franciscan who had been working in Persia, brought the message. The Pope commissioned John and a Dominican named Nicholas. They traveled overland to the Persian Gulf, then by sea to Thana, near Bombay, and went to visit the traditional tomb of Thomas at Mailapur. John writes:

I was in the country of India and in the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle thirteen months, and I baptized there 100 persons and Nicholas my companion . . . died there and was buried in the same Church. And I went on to Cathay [China].

Other medieval travelers similarly bear witness to the continuing presence of the Church of the East, not only in South India, but near what is now Bombay. John went on alone, by sea to Ch'üan-chou, called Zaitun (olive) by the Arab sailors, and then overland to Khanbaliq, arriving in 1294, the year of Kublai's death. Here, alone, John began collecting a choir of boys and teaching them to sing the Latin service, and, helped by European merchants, he built two churches. He believed that Christian worship is the best Christian witness, and wrote:

When they see us in our chapel, with all decorum chanting the service, they wonder more than ever. When we are singing, his Majesty can hear our voices in his chamber. And this is spread far and wide among the heathen, and by God's mercy may have the greatest effects.

He tells of translating New Testament and Psalter into the Mongol language, and making Bible pictures for the illiterate. He was to serve here—later as archbishop—till his death in 1328. News of this beginning caused the Pope in 1307 to consecrate seven Franciscans as bishops and send them as reinforcements; but only three survived the dread-

ful journey. Four more Franciscans, on their way in 1321, were put to death by Muslims at Thana (near Bombay), the first known martyrdoms on Indian soil. We hear of centers of the mission in Zaitun and a few other towns. Christians seem to have been people of non-Chinese race employed in China—officials, soldiers, merchants, and in north and west, of immigrant tribes. With the collapse of the Mongol dynasty in 1368, these foreigners moved out of China, and Christianity with them. The mission had arrived too late for the mass movement which Kublai foretold. It was kept too small and limited. One letter written as from Zaitun says:

If we had their tongues, wonderful works of God would be seen. The harvest truly is great but the labourers are few and without a sickle. For we are but a few brothers and very old and unable to learn languages.

Again there appears the tragedy of division among Christians. We hear more of rivalry than of collegueship between the Franciscan mission and the Church of the East.

Kublai said, "Christians in these parts do nothing," but two Christian monks from near his city of Khanbaliq did much. Sauma and Mark, China-born but of Ongut or Uigur race, decided to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. After incredible hardships they reached Bagdad, but the Seljuk Turks barred the way to Palestine. The catholicos consecrated Mark as bishop and bade him go back to China as Metropolitan. The road back was blocked by war, so the two returned to Bagdad, to find the catholicos dead and the bishops summoned to elect his successor. As a bishop, Mark joined them, and to his surprise found himself elected. So in 1281 a monk from Peking ruled the whole Church of the East, stretching from Syria to the China Sea.

Sauma's journeys were not yet over. The pro-Christian ruler of Persia, Arghun, was ready to join the Christian west in a new Crusade against the Turks. So at last something like the "Prester John" hope might have been fulfilled, if the west had responded. Arghun chose the Christian monk Sauma to lead an embassy to the courts of the west. Sauma went to Constantinople, Rome, Paris, and Bordeaux. His travel diary describes the surprise among the cardinals in Rome when he said:

Many of the Mongols are Christians, including princes and queens. No one has sent to us orientals from the Pope. The Holy Apostles taught us and we still hold today what they handed down.

It describes his entertainment by the king of France, and his own surprise at Paris University—thousands of students busied with "the interpretation of the Scriptures and science." It also describes his meeting with "the king of Alanguitar" (*Angleterre*, French for England). The king, Edward I, asked Sauma to celebrate the Eucharist before him and his court. He used his Syriac liturgy, but (as they said later in Rome) "the language is different but the rite is one." And there the king of England knelt and received the sacrament from the hands of a monk from Peking. If not yet on the whole plane of history, in that scene at least there is expressed the reality of the Universal Church.

chapter 5

A.D. 1350-1500: Eastern Loss and Western Decline, but Hope Ahead

WE CAN best understand the second period of setback by recalling the first, dealt with in Chapter 3. As then, we must distinguish two items—loss to Islam in the east, and decline of the church in the west; then we shall consider some pointers to hope ahead.

Eastern Loss

The rise of Islam in the seventh century weakened Christianity in lands of its early strength—Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was to add eastern Europe to this tragic list. But we must first consider loss to Islam in an area, not of early strength, but of recent opportunity: East and Central Asia. As nomads, the Mongol khans had been content to be simple animists. Having come to rule most of Asia (except India), they felt they must adopt one of its great religions. These were Islam in the west, Buddhism in the east, and Christianity scattered over the whole. For the quarter of a century, 1269–94, there was a chance that they would choose Christianity. Of this Marco Polo had no doubt:

If men should have been sent by the Pope suited to preach our Faith to him, the said Great Khan would have been made a Christian, because it is known for certain that he had a great desire to be so.

Kublai himself had said that this would lead to a mass conversion, "more Christians here than there are in your parts." We may add that Christianity, reinvigorated by this mission of help, might have spread from Mongols and other non-Chinese communities to the Chinese themselves. And Christianity might have claimed the Mongols of Central Asia, before Baber led them over the Himalayas in 1526 to found a kingdom in Hindustan and permanently to plant their religion there. The history of all Asia might have been changed.

These are might-have-beens. The facts are that by 1300 the Mongols were turning, not to Christianity, but in the east to Buddhism, and in the west to Islam. In 1368, China expelled her Mongol rulers and set up a Chinese dynasty again. Non-Chinese communities moved westward, and with them Christianity a second time disappeared from Chinese soil. In Central Asia, by about 1400, Christian tribes and tribes partly Christian had disappeared. Some of these Christians must have been absorbed into Islam. The rest perished in the massacres of Tamerlane, the Mongol who set out to copy the exploits of Genghis Khan, but who left nothing but a trail of destruction across Central Asia. He himself was, and all that survived him in Central Asia seems to have been, solidly Muslim.

The most devastating loss of Christian territory to Islam came with the rise to power of a small Turkish tribe, the Ottomans, on the eastern frontiers of the Byzantine Empire in Asia Minor. Here they founded a Muslim state, with an army almost invincible. Its core was composed of slaves, forcibly taken as children from Christian homes, brought up apart from all tender influences, turned into

fighting men and nothing more. In 1356 the Ottoman Turks crossed to Europe. By the end of the century they had subdued the Balkans. Constantinople remained—the Christian capital of an empire which had ceased to be. It too would soon have fallen but for Tamerlane. This destroyer of Central Asia reached over to Asia Minor to destroy with his Mongol horsemen an Ottoman army and most of the Ottoman state. By 1453 that state had been remade and was ready to finish its task. Constantinople fell. By a grim irony the last Roman emperor, who perished in the street fighting, bore the name Constantine XI, while the sultan of the victorious Turks was Muhammad II. Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria had all gone down before the Arab invasion between 638 and 640; so for 800 years, apart from Rome in the west, Constantinople alone of the Great Sees of the early church had remained free from Muslim rule. Roman civilization in the west had been overrun by northern barbarians in the fifth century, so for 1,000 years Constantinople had stood for the continuing life of the Christian empire. All this was now gone. The Church of St. Sophia built in 537, the crowning glory of early Christian architecture, became a mosque, as did half the churches of the city. Constantine's Christian capital was renamed Istanbul, capital of the—unenlightened—Ottoman Empire. Christian populations of southeast Europe came under a tyranny which for some was only broken at the end of World War I in 1918. Yet the church did survive.

Indeed at this very time in an area farther north we can discern happenings which again may be called compensation. Russia in 1480 shook herself free from Mongol (now Muslim) overlordship, under Ivan III, "Grand Prince of all Russia." Moscow became the center of a vigorous national and cultural life, with the Christian Church as its inspiration. Here it was soon being claimed that, as Constantinople had been founded in 330 as "the New Rome,"

Moscow had now with Constantinople's fall become "the Third Rome," guardian of the Orthodox faith. This sentiment had been current for well over a century when in 1589 the metropolitan bishop of Moscow was raised to the dignity of Patriarch. As Russian culture spread northward, and later eastward, there went with it the spread of the Orthodox Eastern Church.

The Church of the West in this period, 1350–1500, suffered no territorial loss such as we have just surveyed in the east. Indeed in two areas there were gains. In 1386 the king of Lithuania, the last non-Christian country of the north, accepted baptism. Then in 1492 the kingdom of Granada, the last bit of southern Spain under Muslim rule, surrendered to Christian forces.

Decline of the Church in the West

If there was no territorial loss, there was spiritual decline in many aspects of church life, not least in the papacy itself. The period 1378 to 1415 is known to history as that of the Schism (division); there were two rival popes, and for a time three. In the first period of setback, 500–950, western Europe, overrun by barbarians, had looked to Rome for unity. Now the papacy had become a point of division among the western nations. They acknowledged this pope or that, according to political convenience. There were many other signs that the Middle Ages, with the church central and Christianity the basis of civilization, were passing. Instead of a feudal society, strong national states had developed, ready to question the claims of—and even more ready to complain about the cost of—the supposedly supranational papacy. The popes themselves seemed less and less likely to restore the spiritual significance of their office, the Pope at the end of the fifteenth century being a man of scandalous character and complete worldliness. In the year 1500 it could by no means be assumed that the Christian religion would regain its vigor, or

that it would remain central in the life of western Europe.

Let us summarize this grim survey. The Syriac part of the church had disappeared in East and Central Asia, to survive, a small remnant in Persia and Iraq, with a more considerable remnant in South India. The Greek part of the church was a shadow of its former self, worn and broken by the assaults of Islam, and with a limited future, except in Russia. The Latin part of the church was in decline, its position more open to question than for centuries. What hope could there be ahead?

Hope Ahead

There is another aspect to most of the events which this chapter has mentioned. We have spoken of religious decline and the passing of the Middle Ages, but the fifteenth century may be more positively described as a time of intellectual advance and the beginning of the Modern Age. We have noted the fall of Constantinople in 1453 as the death of the Eastern Roman Empire, but contemporary with this was a movement called the Renaissance (rebirth), or Revival of Learning. Western Europe had rediscovered ancient Greco-Roman civilization, and, stimulated by this, there had come, first in Italy, a burst of new painting, sculpture, architecture, writing, study of history, scientific investigation, and invention. The printing press, used in China for centuries but newly set up in Germany about 1450, spread books and knowledge, both old and new. We have mentioned the fall of the Muslim kingdom of Granada in 1492, but that year nowadays is chiefly remembered for the voyage of Christopher Columbus. As the Spanish Peninsula was freed from Muslim rule, there had emerged two new powers, Portugal and Spain. The eastern Mediterranean was becoming dominated by Islam, to the ruin of Constantinople, former middleman of eastern trade; but enterprise at sea was passing to these two countries of the western Mediterranean and the Atlantic sea-

board, and with regard to Christian expansion hope lay with them. Something of this change was already recognized by Pope Nicholas V when in 1454, the year after the fall of Constantinople, he issued a bull (decree) to the king of Portugal concerning "the plan for the Indies." * The plan included not only the winning of non-Christian peoples in "the Indies," but alliance with Christians there, to triumph over Islam. Portugal and Spain had known in their own lands the centuries-long "crusade" against the Muslim Moors. They were to carry something of the crusading spirit with them as they pioneered new routes about the world.

Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460) won fame in 1415 by his part in capturing from the Moors Portugal's first bit of African territory, Ceuta (opposite Gibraltar). He spent the rest of his life organizing expeditions to push farther and farther down the African coast. His contemporary biographer says that he had five motives: discovery (not only of Africa, but of a way round Africa to "the Indies"); commerce; the outflanking of Islam; the chance of finding a Christian ally south of the Sahara (this because of vague knowledge of Christian Ethiopia, at this time often associated with Prester John); and "a desire to make increase in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ." In 1445 Portuguese sailors reached Cape Verde, and the Sahara Desert thus was passed. In 1462 they reached Sierra Leone, and in 1471 they crossed the equator. In 1482 an expedition founded the first European settlement on the Gold Coast, not only planting the flag of Portugal, but celebrating the first Mass on West African soil and praying for the conversion of its people. By 1484 the Portuguese had reached the Congo, and in 1487 Bartholomew Diaz reached the Cape of Good Hope. Good hope indeed! Be-

* The author may be forgiven for adding that the same Pope Nicholas V, a great Renaissance scholar, issued a bull establishing a university in the city of Glasgow, 1451.

yond lay a route which would outflank the Muslim barrier and lead to the desired "Indies."

Five years later came Columbus and his still greater discovery. A Genoese sailor in the service of Spain, his idea was to reach "the Indies" by sailing westward round the world. This is how in 1492 he reported what he had done:

Thirty-three days after leaving Cadiz, I reached the Indian Sea where I discovered many islands. To the first I gave the name San Salvador [Holy Saviour], relying upon whose protection I had come hither.

In calling this sea "Indian," he made the greatest geographic mistake of all time—with not only the wrong country and continent but even the wrong hemisphere. Modern usage, with the terms "West Indies," "American Indian," etc., perpetuates his mistake. His report goes on to explain that the inhabitants are naked savages, ready to exchange things of value for plates, glass, keys, leather straps:

I myself gave them much and took nothing in return. I did this to pacify them, and that they might be led to become Christians. Let Christ rejoice in the salvation of the souls of so many nations hitherto lost. Let us all rejoice, both for the exaltation of our Faith and for the increase of our wealth.

After five years more, the Portuguese brought good hope to fulfillment. In 1497–98 Vasco da Gama sailed round the Cape and on to Mozambique, then crossed the Arabian Sea to Calicut, the greatest achievement up to that time in the whole history of seamanship. Centuries before Muhammad, the Arabs had already dominated the East African coast and all the eastern end of the Arabian Sea. The Por-

tuguese now found them in control of trade routes right across Asia, with Calicut the center of the vast system. And here in the center came the Portuguese to challenge them. The Portuguese soon found that, to remain on the Indian coast at all, they would have not only to take Calicut but to secure all its approaches. By 1515 this was done. They had robbed the Arabs of control of the East African ports and had taken Aden, Hormuz, and Malacca, keys to the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and China Sea respectively. Two years later, in 1517, Portuguese ships were off the South China coast, the first contact between Europe and China for a century and a half. These Portuguese blows against Arab sea power were recognized to be something like a new Crusade, both by the sultan of Egypt, who at one stage threatened reprisals against the Holy Land, and by the Pope, who himself attended a service of thanksgiving for the Christian capture of Malacca.

Meanwhile Spain had been realizing the amazing truth about her "Indies," that this was not, as Columbus had thought, the east coast of Asia, but a new continent, indeed a New World. Her crowning achievement was in the years 1519-22. Magellan, a Portuguese in the service of Spain, sailed through the Straits (at the southern tip of America) which since have borne his name, and crossed the Pacific. His ship not only reached the long-sought Indies, but became the first to sail round the globe.

The headlong course of events has carried us beyond the year 1500 which was our goal; but pausing now at 1522, we see the world open before Christians of western Europe as never before, the whole continent of Africa and all America, indeed the whole habitable world except the Australian continent. It is startling to remember that certain events belong to the same years. In 1517, when Portuguese ships from Malacca first came to the China coast, Martin Luther in Wittenberg issued his challenge against the abuse of indulgences. In 1520, while Magellan's ship

was sailing round the world, Germans burned the Pope's bull condemning Luther, and the Reformation had begun. The new communications, at their widest, exactly synchronize with this burst of new life in the long decadent Christianity of western Europe. New life in the church and new routes across the world! If there is any meaning in history, surely the one was meant to be carried along the other. New life did indeed spring up to match this unequalled missionary opportunity, but the form of Christianity which was to be carried along the new routes belonged, not to the Protestant Reformation, but to the Counter-Reformation. This was to prove the greatest period as yet for Christian expansion.

chapter 6

A.D. 1500-1700: Across Four Continents

THERE ARE two reasons why those parts of the Church of the West which broke with Rome did little to seize the opportunities of this new age.

First, the Reformation affected the small weak countries of northern Europe, still concerned about their own independence, rather than the great powers reaching out over the world for trade and empire. There are two exceptions. England, later to break with Rome, had a small share in the discoveries, John Cabot sailing to Newfoundland in 1497. As the sixteenth century progressed, England was to challenge Spanish sea power, and to make small beginnings of colonies in North America. And from 1568 onward the Netherlands, in a war combining the two causes of national independence and Protestant Christianity, were led to develop sea power, trade, and colonies, at the expense of both Spain and Portugal. The amount of Protestant missionary work resulting was very small.

Second, in most countries Protestants had to struggle so long in self-defense against Roman Catholics in power that they grew accustomed to an attitude of self-regarding. Turned in upon themselves, instead of going out to the

needy world, they spent much strength in disagreeing as to how the gospel might be expressed, when they ought to have been boldly preaching it among the nations. Not till the nineteenth century was any great volume of Protestant Christianity to reach out to the non-Christian world.

However, here in the sixteenth century, there was not only the Reformation, but a second spring of new life which history calls the Counter-Reformation. How near together the two springs rise, though they are to flow down different sides of the watershed and end oceans apart, is best illustrated from the two figures, John Calvin and Francis Xavier. Calvin the Frenchman went to Paris University in 1523; Xavier the Spaniard followed in 1525. The teachers who helped to make Calvin into a great Reformer at first also attracted Xavier. And then in 1528 came an older fellow student, fellow countryman too, and won his heart—Ignatius Loyola. Xavier was the first of that group of Paris students who gathered around Loyola, and were called the Company of Jesus. Calvin became the greatest theologian of the Reformation. Xavier became the greatest missionary of the Counter-Reformation. Having regard to the number of countries where he worked as pioneer, he is the greatest missionary of all time.

Loyola, a Spanish nobleman, had in 1521 been wounded in battle. During a long convalescence he had turned to the life of our Lord, and lives of the Saints, especially St. Francis. He laid aside his arms and lived as an ascetic alone in a cave. Here he fashioned his "Spiritual Exercises." These are a discipline of meditation in four weekly stages. First comes meditation on one's own sins and contrition for them; then meditation on Christ our Captain who calls us to aid him in the reconquest of his world. Response to his call is first shown in penance as one meditates on his passion; and finally in repose as one meditates on his resurrection and on heaven. Strengthened by these Exercises, Loyola went on pilgrimage to Palestine. Here he came to

III.

ACROSS FOUR CONTINENTS A.D. 1500-1700



realize that for Christian warfare he was as yet ill equipped. So back he went to Spain and, a veteran soldier of thirty-three, joined a class of small boys who were learning Latin. And so he went on to two Spanish universities, and in 1528 to Paris. His student group grew into the Company of Jesus, when in 1534 eleven of them received the sacrament and took the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They vowed, too, to go on spiritual crusade to the Holy Land, or, if that should prove impossible, wherever the Pope should command. The Pope recognized the Company of Jesus, or Jesuits, as an Order in 1540, and Loyola was elected their first General. The Order bears the mark of the soldier who founded it—"Company," a military formation; "General," a military command; "the Spiritual Exercises," a manual of military drill. Added to these was a military discipline—instant obedience, whatever was commanded. This is illustrated in the case of Xavier. Palestine was closed to the Jesuits because of the Ottoman Turks, but John III of Portugal was asking for missionaries for Portuguese possessions in India. Xavier was with Loyola in Rome, when he suddenly received this word from his friend and General:

Heaven this day names you for India. Go, brother, whither the voice of God calls you, and inflame all with the divine fire within you.

Xavier remarked, "Well then, let us go." He packed one small bag and set off for Lisbon to catch a ship. These men became the shock troops of the church's new advance. Some were used in the dangerous task of trying to win back lands lost to the Pope by the Reformation. Others, like Xavier, went to the nobler and not less dangerous adventure of missionary work along the routes of Spain's and Portugal's discoveries. The Company of Jesus provides the best, though by no means the only, expression of the Counter-Reformation. There was revived zeal, ready to

express itself in missionary service, in many of the older Orders. We shall find varied company as we now proceed to follow such service about the world.

Latin America

Brazil was held by Portugal; the rest of this vast sphere had been claimed by Spain. The Spaniards in conquering the land destroyed the Aztec and Inca civilizations of Mexico and Peru. These countries had been absolute monarchies, each with its state religion. Used to obeying their rulers, the people did little to oppose the Spaniards as they introduced their own ways and Christianity. Apart from these two civilizations, the American Indians were nomad tribes, hunting, and worshipping their ancestral spirits and tribal gods. The Europeans had little sympathy for such life. The people must be taught to work, and made to work. Thus in the conquest of the country and in its exploitation, destruction and cruelty came to stain this first record of large-scale European overseas colonization.

All this evil was in spite of the high purposes of the rulers of Spain and Portugal, who meant to lead their new subjects to become Christians. The policy was to grant land to Spanish settlers, and then to regard them as responsible for the welfare, body and soul, of the people who lived on it. Columbus had in 1492 written of rejoicing "for the exaltation of our Faith and for the increase of our wealth." Most colonists, then as now, had the second object in view rather than the first. So this paternal Christian relationship with the inhabitants was not often realized.

The church performed two services—as champion of the oppressed and as civilizer of the nomad. It was priests, monks, and friars who protested against exploitation. Foremost of all was Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), the son of one who had sailed with Columbus. He went as a colonist, became a priest, and gave his life to the welfare of the people, going to Spain to plead their cause, and re-

turning recognized as "Protector-General of the Indians." He was regarded as a pro-native fanatic by many of his countrymen. We recognize him as one of the pioneers of the Christian ideal of trusteeship for primitive peoples. He founded a colony in Venezuela to express his ideals.

As missionaries poured into the country, encouraged by the Spanish authorities, a policy better than the chance paternalism of the landlord was developed. Missions were set up, with a central church, then farm buildings and workshops, and the huts of the people around. Here wandering hunters were turned into a settled, civilized (which meant more or less Spanish) village, all under the strict but paternal care of the missionary, who ruled this community as well as taught it. The best settlements were run by the Jesuits in Paraguay in the seventeenth century.

Just as in the conversion of northern Europe, the missionaries belonged to religious Orders. However, instead of the monastery outpost as a small-scale example of a Christian community, there were these settlements where the missionaries were in full control of the entire population. In Europe missionary and people had often been racially akin. In South America they were complete foreigners to each other. In Europe people not long Christian soon had their own nationals as priests and bishops. In South America leadership remained with those of European descent. In Paraguay, for example, in 150 years not a single American Indian was raised to the priesthood. Much in the record of these colonies is not to the credit of Christianity. Much of the Christianity implanted was, and still is, of a poor type and with many pagan practices surviving. Yet Latin America did become, and has remained, a part of Christendom.

The Philippines

While distant from Latin America, these islands should be considered next, because their condition was similar.

They were claimed by Spain, their people were primitive, and, except for mountain tribes, they rapidly accepted something of Spanish ways, including Spanish religion. There was one difference. Because of the remoteness of this possession, its commercial value seemed small. So here, to quote again Columbus' two phrases, "the exaltation of the Faith" did have more attention than "the increase of wealth." Between 1560 and the end of the century a great part of the population had become Christian. This is the only country in Asia to be nominally Christian today.

Africa

We now enter the sphere of Portugal. North Africa had from the seventh century been lost to Islam. In Egypt the Christian Copts survived as a minority. In Ethiopia Christianity was still the official religion, though now ringed round by Islam. Would Christianity, coming this time by sea, be able to outflank Islam and establish itself south of the Sahara? Knowing for the first time the continent as a whole, would Christian forces permanently encircle it?

Alas, Europeans soon began to think of Africa, not as important in itself, but either as a barrier to be got round on the way to the east, or as a country producing slaves for South American colonies. Portugal and Spain had long been familiar with Negro slaves kept by their Muslim neighbors. According to one judgment, "the work of one Negro was worth that of four American Indians." So they began to transport them across the Atlantic by the tens of thousands. A new depth of woe for Africa, especially West Africa, resulted. Pope Leo X, the pope who in 1520 condemned Luther, also condemned this trade in human beings, as contrary to both the law of nature and the law of God. Missionaries to Africa were few, results were small, and none of the work was enduring. About the year 1500, on the West Coast and in the Congo a few chiefs who had

dealings with the Portuguese were baptized, and in 1560 the ruler, with his mother, of a Bantu kingdom in the region of the Zambesi. In 1561, however, this ruler forsook Christianity and allowed the Jesuit missionary, Silveira, to be put to death. Just before being strangled, Silveira said, "I am more ready to receive death than they to give it me. I freely forgive them." A century later there was great rejoicing when another ruler of this important kingdom accepted the faith. This, however, was in the very year, 1652, when the Dutch were landing in South Africa. The end of Portuguese sea power was in sight, and the end of these missions around the African coast would soon follow. Christianity's first outreaching south of the Sahara into Negro Africa had not been impressive.

India

Goa speedily became the greatest of the Portuguese bases on India's coasts. It was made a bishopric in 1533, and soon an archbishopric with authority from South Africa to Japan. In Goa, Muslim mosques and Hindu temples were destroyed, and soon there was a large population of mixed blood, nominally Christian, but with little sign of Christian knowledge or Christian conduct. To this community were added low-caste Indian dependents who had been pressed or enticed to come over. Into this situation came Francis Xavier in 1543. He soon saw the strategic opportunity in Goa, and wrote to Loyola his hope that soon he would have "300 youths of all races, nations and tongues" training for the priesthood. He also saw his immediate pastoral duty, and went round with a handbell in the streets, shouting, "Send your children and servants to the catechism class!" He also visited homes, to encourage regular marriage between those children's parents. Xavier held the views of his time with regard to a Christian monarch's duty. In a letter of the year 1548 to John III of Portugal, he advocates severe penalties for making an idol

or sheltering a heathen priest, and the offer by government of rewards to converts:

Let Your Highness signify to those whom you send out to be in command, that the increase of our holy Faith is what you desire above everything, and that you make the governor or local commandant responsible for this, not just the priests.

At any rate we can approve his emphasis upon the responsibility of laymen, and upon the importance of Christians in public office.

The Paravas were a poor fishing community at the southern tip of India, who had sought Portuguese protection from Muslim pirates. In 1534 priests had baptized 20,000 of them; it was left to Xavier to do something for their instruction. He was not to be in India for long, so, with no time to learn Tamil, he got a rough translation made of creed, commandments, Our Father and a few other prayers:

I learnt them by heart and then went through the whole place collecting as many boys and men as I could, and then I taught them twice daily. In a month they knew the prayers, and I told the boys to teach their fathers and mothers and the neighbours.

With these simple materials, daily prayers could begin in every village, and Sunday worship need not await the coming of a priest. The Paravas have remained Christians, and have in the twentieth century contributed from their community the first Indian diocesan bishop (Latin rite) of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Portuguese early discovered the ancient Syrian Church, claiming descent from Thomas. Vasco da Gama in 1502 visited Quilon. The Syrians welcomed such powerful Christian neighbors, and the Portuguese showed their

friendliness by promising protection and helping with the restoration of some church buildings, most notably with the shrine of Thomas at Mailapur. It was near there that in 1547 the Portuguese discovered an ancient stone cross (page 48). Soon, however, the Syrians began to complain that European priests were proselytizing, and Europeans began grumbling about Syrian "heresy." A new archbishop of Goa brought a new policy. In 1599 he induced a synod of this Eastern Church, the Synod of Diamper, to submit to Rome, and for half a century the victory seemed complete. The decay of Portuguese power gave opportunity for a revolt in 1652. That part of the Syrian community which regained independence had no bishop, so in 1665 their archdeacon was glad to accept consecration from the first-comer. This chanced to be a bishop, not of the Church of the East (Nestorian), but under the so-called Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. The Eastern Church which recognizes him as head has traditionally been accused of an error exactly opposite to that of Nestorius—"Monophysitism"—(belief in one nature; i.e., that our incarnate Lord had divine and human natures merged in one). Actually these ancient (fifth century) Christological differences between west and east were largely due to misunderstandings between those who used Greco-Latin terms and those who used Syriac. What mattered in 1665 was that the South Indian Syrian Christians should have again a bishop of their own.

In 1526, while the Portuguese were strengthening their hold on parts of India's coasts, through the passes of the Himalayas came Baber and his armies to establish the Moghul (Mongol) dynasty, ruling from Delhi over most of India. Baber's grandson, Akbar (1556-1605), extended and consolidated this empire. More like the product of Hindu than of Muslim upbringing, he delighted in bringing together men of different faiths—Hindus, Buddhists, Parsees, Christians. He sought truth from them as well as

from his Muslim teachers. In 1579 he invited the Jesuit College in Goa to send men to his court, and three Jesuits went with great hopes of converting him and winning India at a stroke. This strange mission, invited and subsidized by the Muslim court, enjoyed half a century of favor, but without many converts.

In 1605, Robert de Nobili, a Jesuit of aristocratic Italian descent, nephew of the most famous of the cardinals, arrived in Madura in South India, the center of Hindu Tamil culture. He was disgusted to hear Christians called "Ferengi" (Europeans) and to find few but low-caste folk, forced over or bought over, on the Christian side. Christianity must become Indian, and must win the Brahmins, if it would win India. So he set himself to become a holy man in terms of Indian life. He gave up all a European's ways and dressed, ate, lived, and looked like an Indian. Harder still, he gave up Italian speech for Tamil. He also became the first European to dig into Sanscrit literature. He himself describes his work:

As soon as I had the language, I began discussions, both public and private—often with Brahmins, who are the learned of this land. This year [1609] fifty have been converted, and this is the capital for learning as well as politically, so conversion is harder here than it would be elsewhere.

Soon the Madura Mission was numbering 1,000 converts a year, though only a handful of Brahmins. Some, too easily won, easily fell away. Many regarded this policy as a compromise with heathenism, till a favorable decision from Rome in 1623 silenced such accusations. After de Nobili's death (1656) the storm arose again. The long controversy, known as "the Malabar Rites," continued till 1744, when Rome strictly limited adoption of Indian customs. If the Madura Mission had tended to make Chris-

tianity too Indian, before de Nobili it had certainly been far too Portuguese. Few missionaries can have given themselves more utterly to a country not their own, or more fully exemplified the Apostle Paul's words, "We preach not ourselves."

Ceylon

Success in Ceylon was spectacular even if not all of it was to endure. Between 1505 and 1600 the Portuguese came to control the whole island. Kings of Kotte (Colombo), Kandy, and Trincomalee were baptized, and in some areas whole villages came over. By 1600 a greater proportion of the population was Christian than anywhere else in the Portuguese sphere, and numbers continued to increase till in some areas Christians were a majority. In 1658 the Portuguese were driven out by the Protestant Dutch. Roman Catholicism had been so closely allied to Portuguese rule that the Dutch felt they must suppress it, or supplant it by their own government-sponsored missionary work. Roman Catholics, however, continued to outnumber Protestants.

Burma, Siam, Indo-China, Malaya, East Indies

In the first three of these countries, the Portuguese held no territory, Buddhism was dominant, and converts were few. The Portuguese ruled Malacca from 1511 till its capture by the Dutch in 1641. The religious situation was like that of Goa on a smaller scale. Elsewhere in Malaya there were few Christian gains, because Islam had got in first. Xavier saw the same process being repeated in the East Indies, primitive peoples being won over to Islam. Christians now held the sea routes once dominated by the Arabs, but where were the missionaries? "If only," he wrote in 1545, "a dozen would come out every year, this religion of Muhammad would (here) be destroyed." Christianity was not to win this race with Islam.

Japan

Much of our record has been of a nominal Christianity spreading under the cover of Portuguese imperialism. The most striking achievements, however, were at places beyond the areas of Portuguese rule. In India we saw this illustrated in the Madura Mission. To an even greater extent was it true in the Far East. Xavier wrote prophetically, "There is a finer harvest to be reaped in Japan and China than anywhere." Xaxier was in the Moluccas (south of the Philippines, Map III, page 76) when he heard of the first Portuguese trade with Japan, a land unreached by Christianity. Next he met a Japanese in Malacca, then added two more to his acquaintance. Soon all three were baptized, trained at Goa, and ready to accompany him and three other Jesuits on their venture in 1549. Japan had long been used to adopting elements of culture and religion from China. Buddhism (from India by way of China) was at this time in decline, and many were ready to hear of another religion from even farther west. From 1568 to 1582 the shogun (General), the real power behind the emperor, was himself friendly to Christianity. Thus in a single generation a handful of missionaries is said to have established 200 churches with 150,000 Christians, already one per cent of the nation. By 1600 the community was claimed as at least 300,000. Some of the highest officials were among them. Nagasaki, rapidly developing as the port for foreign trade, became the Christian stronghold. Then a new shogun, a revival of national sentiment, and fear of both Portugal and Spain brought a change of fortunes. An edict of 1614 ordered missionaries to be deported, churches to be destroyed, and Christians to recant. Thousands suffered martyrdom, including many missionaries. Some were beheaded, some burned at the stake, some crucified.

From 1639 the policy was to shut Japan off from all foreign relations, except a limited Dutch trade at one port.

All this was done to get rid of Christianity. Missionaries continued to get themselves smuggled in—one even as late as 1708—though the end could be only prison, torture, and death. Still more surprising, in 1865, after Japan had been brought to reopen her doors, a missionary met fifteen Japanese Christians who told him of communities in islands to the west of Nagasaki and in hill country to the east—50,000 were the numbers they claimed—who had kept the faith and through more than two centuries passed on Christian instruction to their children.

China

In Japan, Xavier came to realize that China was the biggest nation upon earth and one of the most important. The Chinese authorities limited trade with the “ocean devils,” as they called the Europeans, to one small island off the Canton Delta. On reaching here, Xavier tried to find Chinese boatmen who would smuggle him into the country, but the Chinese knew that such action might cost them their lives. Xavier wrote:

The dangers, I am told, are two: First, the boatmen may take our money and then land us only on a deserted island. Second, the governor of Canton might torture and imprison us. This may well be. But there are other and greater dangers which do not concern the Chinese. To enumerate them is tedious but I will mention one—that we lose hope and trust in the mercy of God. To distrust Him is a much greater danger than all the ill His enemies could do.

That was one of his last messages. On the threshold of a closed land, attended to the last by his faithful Chinese interpreter, he died, worn out, in 1552.

In 1583 Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit, not only entered South China, but within twenty years was living in

Peking, the capital, and beginning to influence court circles. He had become Chinese in dress, manners, and speech, and had won friends among the officials by his wide knowledge, so different from their wholly literary education. To his house they would come to examine and discuss his clocks and lenses; mathematical, astronomical, and geographic instruments and books; music, pictures, and paintings; books and Bibles in splendid bindings. Ricci was well read in Chinese literature, was respectful toward Chinese customs, and often used terms from the Chinese classics (*Shang-ti*, Supreme Being, and *T'ien*, Heaven), when he spoke of God. He said that ceremonies showing reverence toward Confucius, and toward one's ancestors, need not be regarded as worship, and so did not inevitably clash with the Christian faith. At his death in 1610 there were said to be 2,500 Christians. These included one of the highest officials, seven members of a family closely related to the emperor, and six ladies of the court. Conversions such as these increased. In 1648, when the Manchus were invading China from the north, the heir to the throne, the empress, and two dowager empresses were baptized, the prince being given the baptismal name of Constantine. Would the history of the Roman Empire indeed be repeated here?

The Manchus triumphed, but Jesuit hopes were still high; for Father Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591–1666), a German, was appointed official astronomer, and had great influence with the new Manchu emperor. Schall wrote:

As of old a star brought the Wise Men to the adoration of the true God, so the Prince of the Far East, through knowledge of the stars, may be brought to recognize and adore the Lord.

Here was another hope unfulfilled. The next emperor was the greatest of all the Manchus, K'ang-hsi. He was a seri-

ous student of European sciences, and for five months studied daily with Father Verbiest. Though never persuaded to become a Christian, it was he who brought the mission to its greatest success, by issuing in 1692 a decree granting freedom of Christian worship throughout the empire. The knowledge that the Jesuits were in favor at court had long kept local officials from interfering, and by this time 300,000 Christians were claimed—to be found in every province except the farthest west. Besides the Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, and some others had come to share the opportunity.

There was, however, serious division among the missionaries, especially Dominicans over against Jesuits, as to how far Christianity might be accommodated to Chinese custom. The famous Rites controversy (compare India) was carried to Rome, discussed among scholars in Europe, and was not silenced for a full century (1634–1742). At its heart were these two questions: (1) Could Christians use for “God” *Shang-ti* and *T’ien* from the Confucian classics, or must they be limited to the one term *T’ien-chu* (Lord of Heaven)? (2) Could Christians join other officials in ceremonies, honoring Confucius as a legislator, without worshipping him; and, similarly, could a Christian join other members of his family in reverence for their ancestors, without worshipping them? The Emperor K’ang-hsi was interested enough to give his own opinion—in support of Ricci’s long-established permission in both respects. When judgment from the Pope was announced in 1704, it proved to be prohibition. A Chinese copy of the Pope’s decision survives, bearing angry notes written in red ink by the emperor’s own hand:

This shows how narrow-minded westerners speak about the high doctrine of China—yet none of them has a Chinese education! . . . The author of this is like any other Buddhist or Taoist priest, but none has

ever gone so far as he. Henceforth no westerner will be permitted to spread his religion in China. Thus we shall avoid many troubles.

K'ang-hsi's threat was not literally fulfilled. The Peking Mission, linked with the court for astronomical and other services, remained unmolested till 1805, but elsewhere from 1707 for more than a century and a quarter there were outbreaks of persecution, with arrests, imprisonments, exiles, and executions. Yet missionary recruits were never lacking, though they came in fewer numbers, sometimes by roundabout routes, and often at risk of their lives. In 1810 thirty-one European and eighty Chinese priests were reported at work in the empire. Though some of its work had been driven underground, the Christian religion was not this time to disappear. When in the middle of the nineteenth century opportunity began again to dawn, there would be a church of something like a quarter of a million ready to greet the new day.

Postscript: The Coming Greatest Period of All

FROM THE preceding chapters it could be shown that movements of renewal in the Christian Church have a way of coming to missionary expression. The clearest examples are the monk, the friar, and the Jesuit. The monk seeks the more wholly committed life, and becomes the medieval missionary. The friar hears again the call to preach, and within a century his preaching has led him from Italy to North Africa, and through Persia to China. The Jesuit becomes the devoted soldier of the church, to find, just as the world is becoming most widely known, that his is a world-wide campaign. The movement of renewal which was robbed of its missionary expression was the Reformation.

In those parts of the Western Church which broke with the papacy in the sixteenth century, there came in the seventeenth and eighteenth further movements of renewal, first in Germany, then in North America, then in Britain. And these did come to missionary expression. Thus Lutheran missions began in 1706, and the full missionary awakening from about 1790. The new opportunities of a new age—the outreaching for world trade which accompanied the Industrial Revolution—found Protestants fore-

most this time to turn these opportunities to Christian use. The Roman Catholic Church benefited from the new opportunities too, and met them with movements of its own which expressed renewed zeal. Thus the nineteenth century became the greatest of all in the spreading of Christianity.

What the first half of the twentieth century has meant may be harder to assess. Its two greatest-of-all wars speeded on some processes, and smothered others. In many countries, through the dangerous years, the foreign mission was receding, and the foreground of the picture came to be the church. As partners in the world-wide church it is for us to estimate, as best we can, the magnitude of the unfinished task,

God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:40)

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